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English

Language Arts 30-1

Module 4

The Poet's Craft



English

Language Arts 30–1

Module 4

The Poet's Craft

English 30-1
Module 4: The Poet's Craft
Student Module Booklet
Learning Technologies Branch
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English Language Arts 30–1

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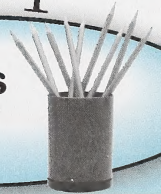
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Module 4

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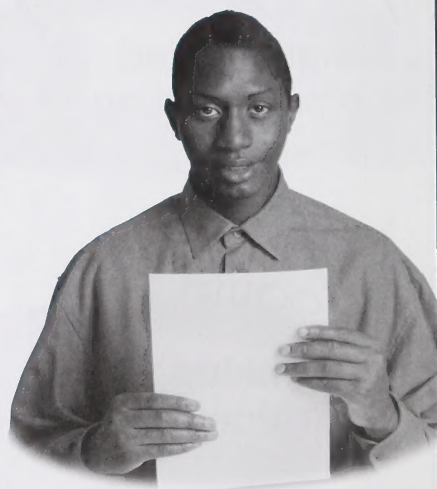
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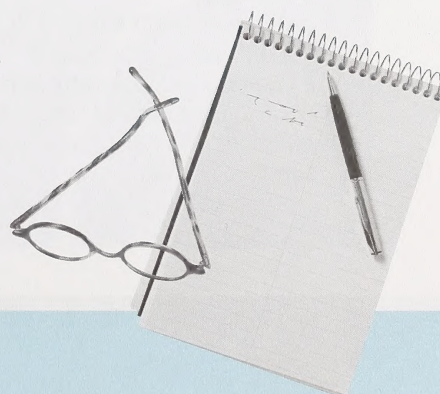
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Looking at English Language Arts 30-1

English Language Arts is an essential part of your education because it teaches you communication skills that you'll use throughout your life. These skills help you connect with other people in your family, community, and workplace, and in the world. As well, your study of literature helps you to understand yourself and other people.

To complete this course, you'll need the following materials:

- seven Student Module Booklets
- fourteen Assignment Booklets
- *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*
- *English Language Arts 30-1 Audio CDs*
- *English Language Arts 30-1 Multimedia Segments CD-ROM*
- *English Language Arts 30-1 Interactive Multimedia CD-ROM*
- *Researching and Making Presentations CD-ROM*
- the play *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller (Module 5)
- the Shakespeare play *Hamlet* (preferably The Global Shakespeare Series) (Module 6)
- the novel *The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver (Module 7)

You are encouraged to make use of the CD-ROMs, which are included in your course package. This course also provides opportunities to search for information on the Internet. Therefore, it would be helpful to have access to a computer with a CD-ROM drive and an Internet connection. If you don't have access to a computer at home or at school, try to arrange to use one at your community library or at the home of a friend.

In addition to the previously mentioned course materials, you should have the following:

- a notebook or binder with lined paper
- a journal (a notebook or a folder on your computer)
- a handbook of English
- a dictionary
- a thesaurus
- a CD player
- a television with either a VCR or a DVD player
- library facilities (school or public)
- a computer with a word-processing application
- occasional access to the Internet
- an audiocassette recorder and blank audiocassettes to record your voice (or appropriate computer software and hardware)

Strategies for Completing This Course

Organize your materials and work area before you begin. Be sure that you have everything that you need. You should also have a quiet area in which to work, away from distractions. As well, you should use a calendar to set goals for yourself to complete each module. Create a schedule for yourself, and display it as a reminder.

Many of the learning outcomes that you need to be able to demonstrate in English Language Arts 30-1 involve your skills in working with others. Therefore, you're encouraged to work with a partner throughout this course. In the lessons within each section, you'll often be instructed to work with a partner or in a group. Although it's possible to do much of this work on your own, you'll likely get much more out of it if you collaborate with others. Your partner can be a friend, classmate, or family member. You don't need to work with the same partner all of the time. If you're having problems arranging for a study partner, contact your teacher.

The *Going Further* boxes that you'll encounter in the Student Module Booklets signal optional enrichment material. *Going Further* provides opportunities for you to investigate further or research a topic or concept that you've explored in the lesson. *Going Further* may also give you a chance to apply your knowledge and skills in a practical way. You're encouraged to read the *Going Further* suggestions and occasionally do some of these enrichment activities.

To achieve success in this course, be sure to read all of the directions carefully; work slowly and systematically through the material in the Student Module Booklets. This approach will ensure that you are prepared for your assignments. Try to set realistic goals for yourself each day and each week so that you'll complete each module in a reasonable time. Do your assignments regularly, and don't forget to review and proofread your work before sending it to your teacher. Careful work habits will greatly increase your chances for success in English Language Arts 30-1.



A ssessment

There are two Assignment Booklets for each of the seven modules of this course. Your work in these Assignment Booklets will be submitted to your teacher for evaluation. If you have difficulty with any of the assignments, you should consult your teacher. Your final mark in this course will be determined by

- the quality of your work in the Assignment Booklets
- your score on the final test
- your performance on any other tests or work that your teacher may assign
- any other criteria established by your teacher or your school

Your teacher or school will provide information about how your marks will be distributed. Remember, the grading you receive in this course will contribute 50 percent to your final mark in English Language Arts 30-1. Your Diploma Exam mark will contribute the remaining 50 percent.

I con List

You will find many visual cues in this course. Among them are a number of icons that appear in the margins. Read the following explanations to discover what the various icons prompt you to do.



Read or view a text.



Refer to one of your handbooks.



Use the Internet (usually optional).



Watch something on television.

Develop, use, or learn a strategy to accomplish some goal.



Get together with another person or a group of people.



Listen to something on the *English Language Arts 30-1 Audio CDs*.



Access information on the *English Language Arts 30-1 Multimedia Segments CD-ROM*, the *English Language Arts 30-1 Interactive Multimedia CD-ROM*, or the *Researching and Making Presentations CD-ROM*.



The Poet's Craft



Section 1 Poetry Snapshot

Section 2 Poetry Is Us

Section 3 Sounds like Poetry

Section 4 Critical Response to Poetry

Poetry began when somebody walked off a savanna or out of a cave and looked up at the sky with wonder and said, "Ah-h-h!" That was the first poem.

—Lucille Clifton

"Ah-h-h!" is a poem that everyone can absorb. There's little that can't be understood—nothing to paraphrase, no rhyme scheme, no allusions. You may secretly wish that all poems were so concise.

But now, in the twenty-first century, language has developed into a complex system of sounds, and

poetry has evolved to a sophisticated art form with a million ways to say "Ah-h-h!"

Whatever the complexity, poetry still tries to convey that same sense of wonder. The poet turns an eye toward the world, takes it in, and puts it back out in another form. In this module, you'll contemplate the function of poetry in a high-tech world. Why does it persist? Is it at all relevant? How do you connect to it? You'll figure out what makes poetry tick, take it apart and put it back together, and just let it sink in. You'll read it silently and aloud, explore its connection to sound, and write about it. And of course, you'll write some poetry of your own.

S

ection 1: Poetry Snapshot

Andrea had always loved poetry and wrote a lot of it all through junior high and high school. It was a little strange for her friend Mario who, though he wrote a lot in his journal, wasn't enthusiastic about poetry at all. At some point Andrea read him a poem she'd written called "Birth Mother." It talked about Andrea's feelings about being adopted. Mario was stunned that Andrea's poem could convey such powerful emotions. As an adoptee himself, he found that her poem really resonated with him. When he first met his birth mother, he'd written a lot in his journal, and he finally decided to turn that writing into a short story loosely based on his own experience. Andrea was eager for Mario to finish the story. How would it present the experience of adoption? How would it be different from her poem? Would it be just as powerful? Would it be harder to write? Could his story and her poem form the beginning of an anthology of writings by adoptees about adoption?

In Section 1 of this module, you'll have the chance to consider the power of poetry. You'll explore some important questions. How do you know a poem when you see it? How does reading a poem affect you differently from reading prose? You'll have the chance to read and react personally to a poem, to formulate your own definition of poetry, and to draw some comparisons between poetry and prose. When you've finished the section, you should be able to come up with your own definition of poetry and explain how it differs from other forms of writing. More importantly, you should also be able to apply your understanding in order to dig deep into poems you encounter and respond to what you find there.

Poetry Snapshot
Snapshot Poetry Snapshot
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Snapshot Poetry Snapshot
Poetry Snapshot



Lesson 1: Sweet-and-Sour Poetry



I don't understand why we spend so much time on poetry. I mean, it can be interesting sometimes but really, what good is it?



Yeah, I sometimes think it's a useless activity. Wasn't there a poet who said straight out that poetry makes nothing happen?



I remember a poem from last year. It was by W. H. Auden—an English poet, I think. Personally, I don't mind reading modern poems, but the old stuff seems pretty lame.



Not me. I love the old stuff. I like seeing how people looked at the world centuries ago. It's neat.



You have some good points. Poetry has many purposes, and there are many arguments for reading it. I'll just mention one of the strongest—poetry slows people down. It makes them stop and look around at the world and their experience of it. This reason is definitely one of my top ten.





1. With a study partner or in a group if possible, use the points made by Ms. Kim's class to brainstorm a list of what you see are the top ten reasons for reading poetry. If you can't think of ten reasons to read poetry, can you think of ten reasons not to read it? Lists of both sorts have been started for you.

Top Ten Reasons to Read Poetry

- *Poetry slows you down.*
- *It gives you a sense of history.*
- *It can be interesting, relaxing, or inspiring.*

Top Ten Reasons Not to Read Poetry

- *Poetry makes nothing happen.*
- *It's a useless endeavour.*
- *The old stuff is outdated.*

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 1 on page 160.

Even if you've never had the same feelings about poetry as the students in Ms. Kim's class, the following creative-writing activity will help you put Ms. Kim's theory to the test. How does poetry slow people down? Why is it important to slow down?



2. This activity can be done individually, but it would best be with a partner or in a group. One person in the group should get some type of small, flavourful candies and put just one candy in an envelope for each participant. Everyone should have a pen and paper ready. Give each person an envelope with a mystery candy inside. With eyes closed, have all the participants open their envelopes and eat their candies at once while at the same time capturing on paper in the most detailed way possible the experiences they're having.
 - a. Freewrite as you savour the candy. Remember, freewriting (or free-flow writing) means that you don't pause or put your pen down until the candy is gone. Don't worry about grammar or spelling or going off the page since your eyes are shut.
 - b. You've probably had candy before, maybe even this type of candy. Did writing about it somehow make the experience different or new?
 - c. How easy was it to find just the right words to describe the taste of the candy?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 1 on page 161.

Like the moment with the candy, poetry forces you to stop and concentrate intensely on one thing. That intense focus can make the moment of reading a poem a new kind of experience even if it describes something as mundane as chewing on a piece of candy. This is one of the most compelling reasons to read poetry—though it’s certainly not the only one.



Poetry, both the writing and reading of it, pushes you toward being precise with words. Because you had time while you were chewing the candy and you were trying to be as exact as possible, you had to search for perfect words. Through this attention to language, you cultivate a higher level of literacy, or skill with language, that allows you to express yourself more effectively in any way that you choose—for example, in other art forms such as music, film, or dance; in the various kinds of writing you do for school; and in all the kinds of communication, written or spoken, that you engage in at work and with your family.

The skills that you develop through the reading and writing of poetry pop up in unexpected places. At Dalhousie University in Halifax, the Medical Humanities Program was established to help medical students become sensitive and fully rounded doctors. Here poetry isn’t seen as frivolous but as a key to the development of important people skills. Those who set up this program agreed that the same skills involved in reading or writing poetry come into play in listening to people. All these activities involve being focused, attentive, flexible, and sensitive. When you work with poetry, you have to listen to the pauses and breaks—just as a good listener pays attention to moments of silence and interprets their meaning.

As you work through this module, you’ll encounter many more reasons to read poetry. You may agree with some of them and you may disagree with others. If you want, look back periodically at your Top Ten lists and revise them as you discover new reasons to read (or not read) poetry.

The Lens of Poetry

In many ways, a poem isn’t unlike other kinds of art that people look at every day—for instance, a photograph or a painting.

3. Brainstorm a list of ways in which a poem might be similar to a photograph. Work with a partner if possible.
4. What would you say is the most important difference between these two art forms?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 1 on page 161.





North American culture has come to rely on images more and more—mainly movies, videos, and photographs—so you’re probably used to “reading” images. By now you’re likely so skilled at interpreting visual culture that you probably don’t even think about it. It feels completely normal to sit down in front of the TV or the Internet.

Perhaps it doesn’t feel completely natural or comfortable to you to read a poem. Poetry is no longer a central method of communication in North American culture, so reading or writing poetry with ease and enjoyment is a skill you have to learn in school at a much older age. If you had grown up with as many poems around you as, say, photographs, you’d probably feel quite different about them.

Imagine for a moment that poems have indeed replaced photographs. You have a poetry album on your bookshelf to commemorate the important moments in your life. In it, for instance, is a poem someone wrote about you on your first day of Grade One instead of a picture. Grandparents open their wallets and whip out poems they’ve written about their grandchildren. When your team wins the championship, a poem is published in the newspaper. Tourists carry pens and notepaper around instead of those heavy and expensive cameras. Everyone has become remarkably adept at sharpening pencils. People have developed fabulous vocabularies, and their finely honed powers of perception verge on the extraordinary.

GOING FURTHER

Dig through some family photo albums. Choose a picture, preferably of you, and imagine it into a poem. What if the person who took the picture had written a poem about you on that day instead of taking a picture? What would that poem be? Pretend you’re that person in that moment and write a short poem to “replace” the photo. Pay attention to the details of the actual photo.



Carmen: That would be a wild world. It would change a lot of things. I mean, my cousin takes a zillion pictures of his baby son every day. He wouldn’t be able to do that if he was writing a poem. He’d have to sit down and think of the words instead of just whipping out his camera.

Levi: Yeah, but I bet people would get awfully bored with reading all those poems.

Fiona: Perhaps. But remember, it takes more effort to write a poem than to snap a picture, so I think there would be fewer poems and they'd probably be better.

Tyson: Besides, it's already boring to look at all those photographs. But I'm sure that there would be bad poems just like there are bad photos—out of focus, the person's head cut off, red eyes, the camera too far away, and all that.

Levi: Yeah, I've looked at a lot of boring photographs. Have you ever noticed how it's more fun to look at photos of your own friends and family?

Carmen: Definitely. But then again, I also like looking at the pictures people take of their vacations—especially if it's somewhere I haven't been.

Fiona: Oh no, I think that's really, really deadly. But I don't mind looking at pictures if it's a place I've been to. Then you can see how it's changed or stayed the same. And you can see what others noticed that's different from what you focused on when you were there.

Tyson: Yeah, I pretty much like pictures of people and places I know.

Carmen: Well, have you ever taken film in to be developed and got the wrong pictures back? I did once and it was surprisingly interesting to look at them even though I didn't know the people.

The most important element of reading a poem is probably also the most important element of looking at a photo. You make a personal connection to it. This is exactly what happened for Mario with Andrea's poem at the beginning of this section. The connection he made was particularly intense because he shared the experience of adoption. A reader who's not an adoptee might not be able to make that much of a connection to Andrea's poem.

Poems won't always offer you familiar experiences, but the experience in a poem doesn't have to be familiar in order for you to make a connection to it. Poetry, like many forms of literature, gives you a glimpse into a vast number of emotions, experiences, places, or moments. The poet speaks, and the reader is given a chance to hear—to experience a glimpse through a door.

... a door opens, a door shuts. In between you have had a glimpse: a garden, a person, a rainstorm, a dragonfly, a heart, a city So a poem takes place.

—Sylvia Plath

5. What do you think of Sylvia Plath's description of how a poem takes place?
6. Of the things she lists, which one most intrigues you? Why?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 1 on page 162.

GOING FURTHER



Here's another chance to slow down and pay close attention to the world around you. Plath has created a metaphor for how a poem works, and you're about to take that metaphor literally.

Find a door, any door. It can be anywhere—at your house, a neighbour's house, your school, a barn, a gym, a hospital, or a mall. You might choose a door you've never been through before. Stand on one side of it—on the outside looking in or on the inside looking out. Take a close look at it while it's closed. What does it look like? Record as much detail as possible about it. What do you guess is on the other side of it?

If it's a door that other people frequently go through, get ready to freewrite and wait for someone to open it. If it's not a very busy door, then ask a friend or a classmate to open and close it for you. If you don't have a partner, then walk over to open and close it yourself. As you freewrite, try to answer the following questions:

- What does the door sound like?
- How does it move?
- Does it swing lightly or scrape along?
- What does it reveal on the other side?
- What comes into view first?
- What comes into view last?
- What makes the strongest impression?
- Is there a lot of action on the other side of the door or is it fairly quiet?
- How long does it stay open? Is it long enough for a whole story to unfold?

Record as much detail as possible with just one glimpse, but if you need or want more detail, open and close the door a few times. Use your notes to produce a description of that moment either in prose or in poetry.

Reading and Responding

Often it helps to have a map to read poetry. This map is actually more of a process. It doesn't mean that you can't read and enjoy poetry on your own whenever or wherever you want. If you follow a process, though, sometimes you see and enjoy things that you wouldn't otherwise notice. Once you become a skilled reader of poetry—which you may already be—you get rid of the map. The process is internalized, and reading poetry becomes as natural as watching TV.



7. What strategies do you adopt when you read prose? Does it help you to underline or highlight points as you read? Do you prefer to take notes in the margins? Perhaps you find it most effective to read the whole extract first and then map out a diagram or web of the most important points. Outline what your most effective reading strategies are.

For helpful comments see the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 1 on page 162.

Prereading Strategies



Until you get to that comfort level with poetry, it helps to prepare for reading a poem. This moment of preparation (and it often is literally a moment) can be called *prereading*. Imagine that you're standing and looking at a closed door (those door metaphors are so appropriate for this topic!). You inspect the door. You guess what's on the other side of it. This is how you prepare to read a poem. Now, what signs will you look for in the poem? Here are a few things you can do to prepare to read:

- Glance at the title. Make sure you understand it, and, if you so choose, do some free-flow writing about your impressions of it. Does the title lead you to think that you have any familiarity with the subject matter of the poem? What does it lead you to expect of the poem?
 - Look briefly at the length of the poem and note its shape on the page. Record any impressions about it.
 - Check out the name of the poet. Do you know anything about him or her? Where did you get that knowledge? Was the source reliable?
8. Here's a chance to try out two of the three prereading strategies just mentioned. You don't even have to read the actual poems. Check out the following titles and names and comment on each one in two or three lines. What do the titles lead you to expect of the poems? Are you familiar with the poets?
 - a. "The Unshakeable Man in Aldergrove" by Shani Mootoo
 - b. "1996" by Gregory Scofield
 - c. "Jesse Meets His Future Wife, Zee Mimms" by Paulette Giles

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 1 on page 162.

Reading Strategies



After you've prepared to read the poem, you can jump right in. Read the poem through once silently just to get a quick impression. Then read it aloud or have someone read it aloud to you so you have an idea of any shifts in pattern, thought, or flow. Finally, read it again silently to adjust your first impressions.

After your first reading, feel free to mark up the poem—as long as it's a photocopy or in a book that belongs to you. If you want, you can mark it in pencil and erase it later. *Mark up* means drawing arrows, highlighting, or underlining any words you notice, phrases you don't understand, metaphors that jump out at you, and so on. It can also mean jotting down ideas or impressions in a word or two. If you prefer not to mark up the poem at this stage, you can always return to do it later if you need to.

First-Level Responses

Reacting to a poem on an emotional or personal level is the first level of reading a poem, and it's probably your most natural response. It requires no preparation because it's simply your immediate reaction to the work.

The first-level response has to happen before you can go anywhere with the poem, so pay attention to this reaction at all times. Never discount it no matter how silly or unanalytical it may seem; it provides a stepping-stone for any deeper understanding of the poem that you might come to.

You shouldn't have to ask yourself many questions in order to find out what your reaction to a poem is. Your reaction just is. It might be "I love this poem!" or "This poem is totally stupid. It doesn't speak to me at all." You don't really have to think about it. It might be instinctive and without clear reasons. The following chart gives you an idea of the kinds of responses that occur at the first level along with some questions you might ask.

First-Level Responses to Poetry	
Sample Questions	Sample Responses
Do I like this poem?	Wow, this poem blows me away.
Does it speak to me?	I hate this poem.
Do any of the images appeal to me?	This image is great.
Can I connect with this poem?	It grosses me out.
Is the experience in it familiar?	It's too stuffy for me.
Is the language in it familiar?	It makes me feel sad.
Was it easy to read?	I don't get it.

A Poem at Last

Now you'll have the chance to practise your prereading, reading, and first-level response strategies on a poem by Mary Oliver, a poet from the United States who writes extensively about the natural world.

Writing Folder Suggestion 4A

What do you think of nature as a source of inspiration for poetry? Have you read poems about nature before? What were they like? Did you enjoy them? Have you ever written poetry about nature? Why or why not?

If you turn the page and glance at Mary Oliver's poem, you'll see that its title is "Wild Geese." As a Canadian—especially if you live in a rural area—chances are that you've seen wild geese frequently in your life. Perhaps you've watched them flying overhead in the spring and fall or seen them swimming and nesting on lakes. Maybe you've heard their call as they've flown by—or even detected the swish of their wings as they flew low in the still evening air looking for a place to spend the night.

Experiences of these sorts will have created all kinds of associations in your mind about wild geese, and these associations are things you'll bring to your reading of the poem. And even if you've never seen or heard real wild geese, just hearing them spoken of will, in the same way, have created associations for you.



9. Bearing all this in mind, what are your initial feelings on reading the poem's title? How would those feelings change if the poem had simply been called "Geese"?

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 1 on page 162.



Now read Oliver's poem "Wild Geese" silently and, if possible, aloud. After you've read it at least twice, respond to the questions that follow the printed poem.

Wild Geese

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

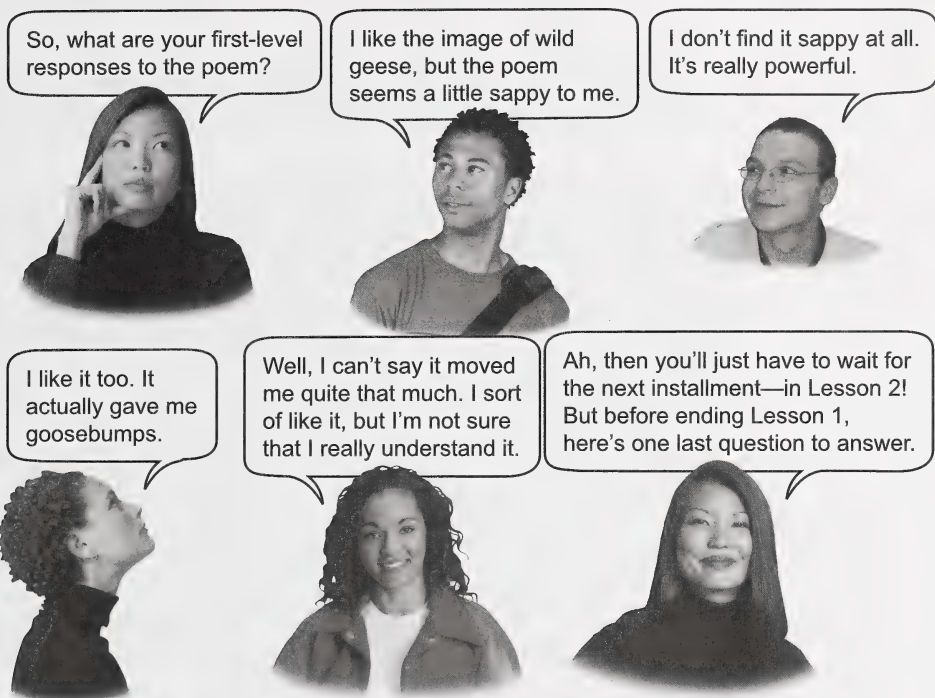
1

10. Write a two-minute free-flow response to reading "Wild Geese." Don't worry about format or grammar or spelling mistakes; just keep your pen moving across the page.
11. Does the poem speak to you? If so, can you explain, very simply, how?
12. What is the first image that strikes you in the poem?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 1 on page 163.



¹ Mary Oliver, "Wild Geese," in *Dream Work* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986) 14. Reproduced by permission.



13. How do you know that “Wild Geese” is a poem?

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 1 on page 163.

Lesson 1 should have sparked some ideas in your mind about poetry and why people read it and study it. In working through the lesson, you've drawn comparisons between poetry and other art forms, and you've done your first freewriting for Module 4.

You've had the chance to read and react to a poem at the first level in Lesson 1. The importance of your first-level response to poetry was emphasized in the lesson. You should now realize that—before all else—it's crucial for readers to make and define their personal and emotional connections to a poem.

In Lesson 2, you'll be examining what you already know about poetry and working with several different definitions of it.

Lesson 2: Defining the Undefinable



Think back to the last question in Lesson 1. How did you know that Mary Oliver’s “Wild Geese” was actually a poem? Poetry has many complex characteristics, but probably you didn’t take the time to assess them all. In all likelihood, you just glanced at the page and knew that it was a poem. The first clue was the shape of the words on the page. Your eyes are trained to recognize poetry as words that are arranged so they don’t fill in the lines from margin to margin but rather leave white space.

1. Take the first six lines of the poem (as far as the word *mine*) and write them out in your notebook from margin to margin on your page—as you would if you were writing a personal essay, for example.

Now look at what you’ve written. Read it through once or twice.

- a. Does your experience of the poem change when it’s set up this way from margin to margin?
- b. Would “Wild Geese” stop being a poem if this was how it had been written?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 2 on page 163.

Of course, the arrangement of the words on the page is only one part of what makes poetry poetry. On its own, it isn't always an accurate way to tell that a poem is a poem. There are many other characteristics to take into consideration.

Poets on Poetry

Over the ages, poets have offered up all kinds of ideas about what poetry is. Many of their ideas about poetry encompass general questions about the purpose of art in society. Poets themselves don't have a single vision of what poetry is. Many of their ideas contradict and bump against each other. Read the following definitions of poetry by a number of poets. Think about each one; then respond to the questions that come after them.

Poetry gives us revelations, flashes, which illuminate those things which were mysterious to us.

—Victor Hernandez Cruz

Ultimately, a poem has an electrical force field which is love.

—Joy Harjo

Poets are like steam valves, where the ordinary feelings of ordinary people can escape and be shown.

—Sharon Olds

It's the poet's job to remember.

—Gerald Stern

I throw out the poem like a net and pull things together with thin threads of language that need mending, that need new patterns to catch the light.

—Lorna Crozier

Poetry is not magic. In so far as poetry, or any other of the arts, can be said to have an ulterior purpose, it is, by telling the truth, to disenchant and disintoxicate.

—W. H. Auden

Poetry lies in the meeting of the poem and the reader, not in the lines of symbols printed on the page . . . What is essential is the almost physical emotion that comes with each reading.

—Jorge Luis Borges



[Poetry] takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity.

—William Wordsworth

Poetry is like a stove in the summer or a fan in the winter. It runs against the popular taste and has no practical use.

—Basho

If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.

—Emily Dickinson

Poems are like dreams; in them you put what you don't know you know.

—Adrienne Rich

As imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
a local habitation and a name.

—William Shakespeare



[Poetry is] hundreds of things coming together at the right moment.

—Elizabeth Bishop

Poetry is life distilled.

—Gwendolyn Brooks

2. a. Which definition resonates the most with you? Why?
- b. Do you strongly disagree with any of these definitions? If so, identify it and explain why you disagree.
- c. Which definition would you say is itself the most poetic? Why?

- d. Are there any strong images in these definitions that appeal to you? Identify any you find especially compelling.
- e. Do any of the definitions contradict or overlap with each other? Explain your response.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 2 on page 164.

Writing Folder Suggestion 4B

Reread the quotations from Jorge Luis Borges and Emily Dickinson. Can words actually produce a physical sensation in the reader?

Have you ever had an experience with art—any kind of art—that was so powerful it actually produced a physical sensation? Perhaps it didn't take off the top of your head, but maybe it made you feel breathless or even, possibly, ill?

If you've had an experience of this sort, describe the piece of art and how it affected you.



Emily Dickinson

Now open Assignment Booklet 4A, turn to the Section 1 Assignment, and respond to question 1.

A Definitive Definition

Todd Swift, a poet from Montreal, offers a definition of poetry. He maintains that poetry “includes any form of art that can be made from words, or the sounds and letters which words are made out of, freeing us all to make new worlds.”

You're about to read the full details of Swift's definition. He covers a lot of bases, so take a moment first to consider how you can best absorb all of it. Remember those reading strategies you discussed in your Writing Folder entry for suggestion 4A, if you chose to respond to that suggestion. And as you read, remember to keep in mind your own definition of poetry and the definitions that you've been looking at.



Poetry: A Concise Definition for the 21st Century

Poetry is any written or spoken use of words which seeks to express—through a combined sense of sound and meaning, music, emotion and idea—the full capacity of language(s), testing the very limits of experience, imagination and what can be said; any theme or subject, level of diction, is available to the poet, although poetry has tended to deal primarily with intersections of the universal and personal, returning continually to the subjects of love, death, time, memory, family, nature, beauty, history and the gods.

Poetry is created by poets, any human who chooses to enter the long tradition of poetry's art, craft and history by doing his or her best to make poetry, according to the definition above. Poets may work through an entire lifetime, or for only a brief period of intense creation, but they are serious and dedicated artists who fully respect the profound contexts and communities their work connects. As knowledge and facility may grow with time and experience, we often speak of “younger” and “older” poets, to signify the stage at which the poet is working; this is not necessarily a pejorative description.

Poetry can be combined with other media, sung, spoken, acted, recorded or printed, in a nearly endless series of experiments with its ultimate limits, of which, so far, none have found. Finally, it must be said, few if any poets agree on what a poet, poem or poetry itself, is; as such, any ultimate definition will fail to satisfy most or all. The best way to define poetry is to do it.

3. This definition has a lot of parts to it.
 - a. As you read it, did you come across any parts that you found surprising or inaccurate?
 - b. In what ways does Todd Swift's definition match your own definition?
 - c. In the last paragraph, Swift seems to say that poetry is undefinable. Do you agree? If you do, can you explain why people continually try to define it?
 - d. Note the list of topics that Swift says poetry is concerned with.
 - (1) Did he miss any topics according to you? If so, what are they?
 - (2) Why do you think humans are preoccupied with these particular subjects?
 - e. What does Swift mean in the first paragraph when he mentions the “level of diction” available to the poet?

¹ Todd Swift, “Poetry: A Concise Definition for the 21st Century,” 2001, <<http://www.poets.ca/pshstore/sidebar/whatis.htm>> (4 April 2003). Reproduced by permission of the author, Todd Swift.

- f. In point form, list the aspects of poetry that Todd Swift mentions. Which ones have to do with content (what is said)? Which ones have to do with form (how it's said)? Arrange them in a chart such as the one shown here. It's been started for you.

Aspects of Poetry	
Form/Structure/Aesthetics	Subject/Content/Inspiration
• <i>written</i> • <i>spoken</i> • <i>sound</i>	• <i>limits of experience</i> • <i>limits of imagination</i> • <i>any theme</i>

aesthetics

qualities relating to beauty

- g. What does Swift have to say about poets?
- h. Why would Swift have used prose instead of poetry to give his definition of poetry?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 2 on page 164.

GOING FURTHER

The last sentence of Todd Swift's definition is "The best way to define it is to do it." Follow Swift's advice; take the time to write a poem now. If you're used to writing poetry and feel comfortable doing it on your own, go for it. If you're a little apprehensive and want some guidance, you can use some of the following pointers. These options always can be used for first-level responses:

- Take a line or an image from "Wild Geese" and turn it into the first line of your own poem.
- Borrow an image from one of the definitions of poetry that you find attractive and use it as a starting point for your own poem.
- Tap into the rhythmic and repetitive quality of poetry. You'll notice that Mary Oliver repeats "You do not have to . . ." twice at the opening of "Wild Geese." Use that line or choose a different "starter phrase" to write a "list" poem in which all the lines begin with the same series of words.



In Lesson 2, you've started to assemble a definition of poetry that will probably grow and develop as you work through the remainder of Module 4. In this lesson, you've also considered the views of poets and other thinkers and compared their thoughts on poetry with your own.

In Lesson 3, you'll continue your exploration of the nature of poetry by exploring some of the differences and similarities between poetry and prose.

Lesson 3: Poetry and Prose



Poetry and Prose—How They Differ

It was probably no surprise to you in Lesson 2 that Todd Swift laid out his definition of poetry in prose. The vast bulk of the written information that you've taken in throughout your life has come to you in prose. Prose probably makes up most of your reading; newspapers, magazines, websites, textbooks, novels, instruction booklets, junk mail, comics, and short stories are all written in prose. Just as it was hard to imagine earlier in Section 1 what it would be like to replace a photograph with a poem, it's also hard to imagine reading the latest news in poetry. If you walk into your neighbourhood bookstore, you'll see that the poetry section is tiny compared to the fiction and non-fiction sections—all written in prose.

1. Which do you think developed first as an art form and a written means of communication—prose or poetry? In your response, explain why you think this would have been the case.
2. Outside of your English Language Arts 30-1 class, when in your life do you expect to encounter writing that's poetry instead of prose?
3. Poetry often seems to crop up at ritual moments—moments that mark the cycles of life—such as birthdays, weddings, graduations, and funerals. Have you ever noticed this phenomenon? Why do you think people turn to poetry at these times?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 3 on page 166.

In the past, poetry had a wider function than it has today. It fulfilled many of the roles that prose now fulfills. Drama was written in poetry—as you know from your study of Shakespeare's plays. As well, education and entertainment often took the form of storytelling in rhyme, and even news was passed on through verse. It's important to remember that at one time humans didn't live in such an immediate world as you do. Information wasn't as readily available as it is today; for instance, until the telegraph was invented in the late nineteenth century, news would take days or weeks to arrive overland. People living across the ocean often had to wait months.



4. Use the following questions to clarify for yourself some of the differences between poetry and prose. If possible, work with a study partner or in a small group. If you wish, create a chart like the one that follows the questions to organize your responses.

- What characteristics do you associate with prose?
- What topics do you think prose covers best?
- What characteristics do you associate with poetry?
- What topics do you think poetry can cover best?

	Prose	Poetry
Characteristics		
Topics		

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 3 on page 166.



Prose and poetry are often seen as opposites, but there's much to be found in poetry that's like prose, and there's much to be found in prose that's like poetry. Prose frequently incorporates poetic language and relies on rhythm and sound. Poetry isn't always concerned with beauty and emotion; it can be straightforward, hard-hitting, or ugly as well.

A lot of writing crosses the boundary between prose and poetry. Two contemporary Canadian writers provide good examples. Poems are incorporated into Michael Ondaatje's mostly prose memoir *Running in the Family*, and George

Elliott Clarke's work *Whylah Falls* is a novel written entirely in poetry. These days, genres are often blurred and less clearly defined than they once were. There's also a renewed popularity of the poetic form known as a **prose poem**.

prose poem

a piece of writing in prose format but poem-like in its use of language

One of the most powerful experiences that poetry has to offer the reader is its concentrated, intensified language. Poetry is often seen as closer to the subconscious than prose because it disrupts the usual orders of language. It doesn't always proceed logically but often links images or ideas in ways that short-circuit conventional language rules. Does this allow poetry to touch a deeper note inside the reader's subconscious? You'll have to decide this for yourself.

Read the following poem by Michael Ondaatje—"Griffin of the Night." A griffin, by the way, is a mythical animal that changes, halfway along its body, from an eagle to a lion. Knowing this **allusion** to a creature that was two things in one might aid a bit in your understanding of the poem.



allusion

a reference, explicit or implicit, to someone or something with which a text creator assumes the audience will be familiar—often a historical, literary, or mythological person or event

Griffin of the Night

I'm holding my son in my arms
sweating after nightmares
small me
fingers in his mouth
his other fist clenched in my hair
small me
sweating after nightmares.

5. Translate this short poem into prose. Use complete sentences and conventional rules of grammar. Try to write a passage that makes sense and conveys the poem's meaning.
6. Explain the steps that you took to translate the poem into prose. What did you eliminate? What did you add?
7. Which is longer, the poem or the prose piece?

¹ Michael Ondaatje, "Griffin of the Night," in *The Cinnamon Peeler: Selected Poems* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1992), 31. Reproduced by permission of the author.

8. Does the poem have to change extensively? Is it entirely erased by the prose?
9. Reread the two versions. Does the poem have the same effect? Which do you prefer? Be sure to give your reasons.
10. Get someone you know to read and react to the two versions. What is his or her preference?



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 3 on page 167.

Poetry tends to be economical in its use of words. That means that fewer words are used but more power is invested in each one; a word can stand for a phrase, a phrase for a sentence, and a line for a paragraph. If you try to **paraphrase** a poem, or “translate” it into prose, your translation will tend to be longer and looser than the poem itself.

paraphrase

restate a passage in your own words in order to ensure understanding

Poetry is also about what is **not** said; the white space on the page also speaks.

GOING FURTHER

You’ll need to have access to a computer word-processing program in order to complete this question.

Take a poem that you or someone else has written and type it into the computer, or if you prefer, you can copy a poem off of the Internet. Run a spelling and grammar check on the poem. What mistakes does the computer point out?

Let the computer correct all of the mistakes that it identifies. What does the poem look like in the end?



Now open Assignment Booklet 4A, turn to the Section 1 Assignment, and respond to question 2.

Poetry and Culture

Many of the assumptions that people have about poetry come from the cultural position that it has come to occupy. Every art form plays a different role in society. Some—like television—are everyday, inexpensive, and enjoyed by almost everyone on a regular basis. Others—such as ballet—seem more removed from society at large. They occur less frequently, are more expensive, and are enjoyed by smaller numbers of people. This kind of art is sometimes called **high culture** (or *fine art* or *beaux arts*). High-culture art is seen as the epitome of artistic achievement and an embodiment of excellent taste, noble sentiments, and meticulous skill. In contrast, the more common and easily accessible art can be referred to as **low culture**. Art forms of this sort are sometimes given labels like *folk*, *popular*, *decorative*, or *commercial*.

high culture

forms of art and expression that are generally highly esteemed and often considered elite

low culture

art forms that exhibit mass appeal and are often judged to be of less noble purpose and lower artistic worth than the high-culture forms



High culture and low culture! That sounds just a bit snooty to me. Is the implication that if I like listening to rap music more than opera I'm a lowbrow?

It does sound a bit like that, doesn't it? I think that when these names were first coined this was the general opinion, and for that reason I don't like the terms much myself. But the distinction itself is a useful one. Maybe if you think of them as mass culture as opposed to culture with a more limited audience, you won't be quite so offended.



11. Check out the following art forms and decide whether they should be classified as high or low culture. Keep in mind that the categories aren't rigid. Some art forms may belong to both or have been considered high culture at some point in history and low culture at another.

If it helps, use a chart like the one that follows the list to organize your response.

- needlepoint
- nursery rhymes
- blockbuster movies
- art films
- TV talk shows
- woodcarving
- drumming
- hip-hop
- avant-garde dance performances
- bluegrass music
- operas
- the tango
- Broadway musicals
- home videos
- poetry readings

High Culture	Low Culture

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 3 on page 168.

12. Poetry has straddled both forms of culture. Bearing this in mind, respond to the following questions. Use any poems you've studied in school or that you've encountered anywhere else.
 - a. What are some examples of low-culture poetry?
 - b. What are some examples of high-culture poetry?

Poetry is highly flexible, and it reflects a myriad of concerns. Often people mistakenly believe that it must depict lofty subjects using inaccessible language. This makes poetry seem a frivolity rather than an everyday part of life. While at times in history poetry has been upheld as a mysterious and inaccessible art only for the highly literate, many writers struggle to bring it down to earth. This might be reflected in the kind of language they use—for instance, dialect or colloquial, conversational language—or it might be reflected in the kinds of topics they choose to write about. For example, the Chilean poet and Nobel Laureate (winner of a Nobel prize in literature) Pablo Neruda called for poetry that was inspired by work, that was “worn with the hand’s obligations, as by acids, steeped in sweat and in smoke.” Poetry often concerns itself with the mundane. It may even drift into fields that you might think are better suited to prose.

13. American poet Audre Lorde insisted that “Poetry is not a luxury.” What do you think she meant by this statement?

You’ll take a look at the poem of another Nobel Laureate, Wislawa Szymborska, who often writes poetry about whimsical or unexpected subjects. Consider the title of her poem “A Word on Statistics” published in English in 1997.

14. What are statistics? What kind of information do you usually associate with them?
15. What is your initial reaction to a poem that seemingly takes statistics as its subject?



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 3 on page 168.

Now read Szymborska's poem.



A Word on Statistics

Out of every hundred people,
those who always know better:
fifty-two.

Unsure of every step:
almost all the rest.

Ready to help,
if it doesn't take long:
forty-nine.

Always good,
because they cannot be otherwise:
four—well, maybe five.

Able to admire without envy:
eighteen.

Led to error
by youth (which passes):
sixty, plus or minus.

Those not to be messed with:
four-and-forty.

Living in constant fear
of someone or something:
seventy-seven.

Capable of happiness:
twenty-some-odd at most.

Harmless alone,
turning savage in crowds:
more than half, for sure.

Cruel
when forced by circumstances:
it's better not to know,
not even approximately.

Wise in hindsight:
not many more
than wise in foresight.

Getting nothing out of life except things:
thirty
(though I would like to be wrong).

Balled up in pain
and without a flashlight in the dark:
eighty-three, sooner or later.

Those who are just:
quite a few, thirty-five.

But if it takes effort to understand:
three.

Worthy of empathy:
ninety-nine.

Mortal:
one hundred out of one hundred—
a figure that has never varied yet.

Writing Folder Suggestion 4C

Freewrite for one minute about this poem. Just let yourself go and respond—but remember to keep on writing.

¹ "A Word on Statistics," from MIRACLE FAIR by Wislawa Szymborska, translated by Joanna Trzeciak. Copyright © 2001 by Joanna Trzeciak. Used by permission of W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.

16. Is the poem actually about statistics? How would you describe what it is about?
17. Statistics are often associated with authoritative scientific studies that are thought of as factual and irrefutable. Does this poem seem to have the same kind of certainty and authority?
18. How would you describe the way in which Szyborska has set up this poem? What effect does the form have on what she's written?
19. What is the most powerful moment in the poem for you, if any? Try to explain why.

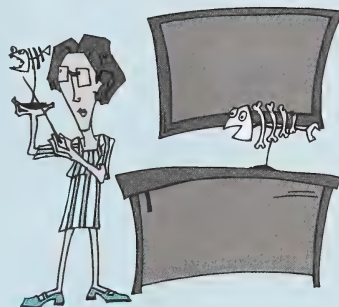
Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 3 on page 170.

Poetry moves across all genres and concerns itself with every aspect of human existence. While common themes emerge, poets choose topics, points of view, and language that combine and merge with originality and power. Poets experiment continuously—often, like Szyborska, taking language, forms, or inspiration from unexpected sources.

Writing Folder Suggestion 4D

Choose a topic that's close to your heart and that you'd like to explore right now in writing. Then imagine one of your other classes. It might be biology, physics, social studies, or art. Brainstorm a list of vocabulary that comes from that particular class. A quick glimpse into your notes or into your textbook will give you some ideas.

Now, using the language of that particular class, imagine a poem that covers the topic close to your heart that you'd like to explore. Write that poem or, if that seems too challenging, try to describe it in prose.



In Lesson 3, you've had chances to both read and write poems. You've explored many of the characteristics of poetry, and you should have come to understand in some depth the differences between poetry and prose.

In Lesson 4, you'll further examine the process of writing and you'll think about your own writing as well.

Lesson 4: Poetic Processes



Many definitions of poetry pay more attention to the end product of the poet's work than to the work itself. While poets are fascinated with what a poem is, they're also interested in what goes into making a poem. Where does the urge to write a poem come from? How does the poet move from that initial urge all the way through to building an actual poem? Is the process of writing a poem somehow magical or intuitive? Can it be learned? Can poets write on demand?

As you've probably already discovered, the creative process is a mysterious one. Poets have been lauded as holy figures who receive their poetry from divine inspiration. They've been upheld as delightful geniuses whose presence graced the courts of kings and queens. They've been seen as purveyors of vulgar tales and gossip who tramp from town to town. Writing poetry has often been thought of simply as a form of work, and poets haven't always been motivated exclusively by beauty and inspiration; sometimes, they've been writing for a paycheck. Today, few poets survive by writing poetry alone. Many have day jobs that are unrelated to writing. Others teach writing in schools or at universities.

Today, views on the creative process aren't completely homogenous either. Poets have many different approaches to the act of creation. For some, it's highly intuitive; for others, it's highly disciplined. Some poets operate very methodically—for example, writing a poem per day—while others are more impulsive, squeezing out a poem much less frequently.

1. **a.** Write a brief description, either in prose or in poetry, of something that you've made with your hands. It may be a piece of art or something more practical—for example, a tree house, a sweater, a cake, or a piece of pottery. Then describe the process; use details, but try for an interesting, colourful description rather than a strictly technical one.
- b.** Do the same thing now with your own writing process. How does the writing process work for you? Do you find it easy to “create” writing? Describe, as accurately as you can, the process you use for writing. Use either poetry or prose. If thinking of a particular piece of your writing helps, just focus on the process of writing that one piece.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 4 on page 171.

2. Your responses to questions **1.a.** and **1.b.** focus on two different creative processes of your own. Place both your responses in front of you, side by side if possible, and study them.
 - a.** What similarities and differences do you see between the two processes you've described?
 - b.** What kind of language characterizes each one? Use a chart like the following one to identify the specific verbs, nouns and pronouns, and adjectives you've used. When the chart is complete, examine it and compare the two columns. Record any observations you have to make.

If you're feeling a little uncertain about nouns, verbs, and adjectives, refer to your handbooks. If you're using the *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*, see Section 2: Grammar, under the subheading Parts of Speech.

	First Process	Writing Process
Adjectives		
Nouns and Pronouns		
Verbs		

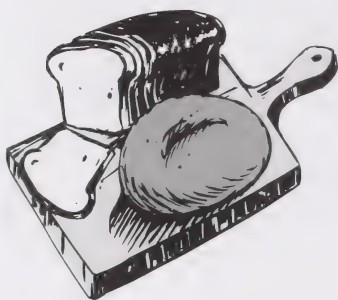


- c. Finally, imagine describing your writing process using the sort of language of the first description that you wrote. You don't have to use precisely the same words, but try for the same sort of vocabulary. Try this now—using either prose or poetry.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 4 on page 171.

extended metaphor

an explicit comparison that's carried throughout a text and is based on several similarities between two things



By making this transposition—drawing a parallel between these two creative processes—you've created an **extended metaphor**. Metaphor is the bread and butter of poetry (which is itself a metaphor, though perhaps a feeble one). Poets frequently (but not always) describe one kind of experience in the language of another kind of experience. In other words, poetry frequently relies on language that's figurative—language that doesn't work on a literal level but rather a second, or comparative, level.



3. Get together with a partner, a fellow student, or a group of interested people. Make a long list of nouns, the more random the better. Write them on slips of paper and put them in a hat. Each person should draw two. Once you each have your words, write a comparison between them. Read all of your comparisons aloud. Scramble them up and try it again.

Here's an example to give you the idea. This person drew the words *pottery* and *tangerine*.

The pottery slid beneath her hand, a smooth and cool tangerine.

If you're working alone, look at the following two lists of words. Close your eyes and pick a random word from each list. Create your comparison and then try again.

- | | |
|---------------|-----------|
| • night | • snow |
| • baby | • fox |
| • tangerine | • book |
| • gearshift | • pottery |
| • thermometer | • tree |
| • velvet | • shoe |

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 4 on page 172.



Keeping in mind the comparisons you just made and the metaphor you created to describe your writing process, read Naoshi Koriyama's poem that describes writing poetry in the language of baking bread. Then respond to the questions that follow the poem.

A Loaf of Poetry

you mix
the dough
of experience
with
the yeast
of inspiration
and knead it well
with love
and pound it
with all your might
and then
leave it
until
it puffs out big
with its own inner force
and then
knead it again
and shape it
into a round form
and bake it
in the oven
of your heart



1

4. Create a first-level response to this poem.
5. What is the most memorable image or line from this poem for you?
6. Could you see this poem working if the comparison were reversed? For example, what if it was called "A Stanza of Bread" and it described baking bread in the language of writing a poem?
 - a. Write the opening lines of this imagined poem.
 - b. In your estimation, would this be an effective poem? Why or why not?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 4 on page 173.

¹ Naoshi Koriyama, "A Loaf of Poetry," in *Collected Poems* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1996). Reproduced by permission of the author.



Koriyama uses the domestic practice of baking bread to talk about the art of making poetry. Many poets have used this metaphor. For instance, Nicaraguan poet Claribel Alegria says, "Poetry is like bread—everybody shares it," while Pablo Neruda has the following to say about poetry.

I have always maintained that the writer's task has nothing to do with mystery or magic, and that the poet's, at least, must be personal effort for the benefit of all. The closest thing to poetry is a loaf of bread or a ceramic dish or a piece of wood lovingly carved, even if by clumsy hands.

—Pablo Neruda

7. Do Koriyama's poem, Neruda's quotation, and Alegria's statement connect in any way to Audre Lorde's statement "Poetry is not a luxury"? Explain your thoughts.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 1: Lesson 4 on page 173.

GOING FURTHER



Poets themselves are fascinated with the process of writing poetry and frequently write poems about it. If you have access to the Internet, visit the following website, which features a whole series of poems about writing poems (always bearing in mind that web addresses change and sites can come and go). Some of the poets are obscure and some are very well known. They compare poetry to a number of activities including pouring concrete and sewing a quilt.

http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/~morton/Telecourse/Poetry/poems_on_poems.htm



Another resource you might find very interesting if you'd like to learn more about the process of creating poetry is right on the *English Language Arts 30-1 Interactive Multimedia* CD-ROM that accompanies this course. Watch the segment titled "The Poet's Craft"; you'll be able to hear what real poets have to say about the creative processes involved in the craft of writing poetry.

In Lesson 4, you've played around with metaphors—one of the main tools used by poets. You've had the chance to think about the process of poetry writing and how poets actually make a living. You've also had the chance to reflect on your own creative processes. And, of course, you no doubt got hungry thinking about all that fresh-baked bread.

Now turn to Assignment Booklet 4A and complete the remaining question for this section.

Conclusion



Section 1 has given you a snapshot—perhaps several snapshots—of poetry. Some of the information may have been review for you, but some of it may have been new. Throughout the section, you’ve had the chance to read and respond to several poems. Section 1 outlined the processes of prereading, reading, and expressing first-level responses. You’ve had the chance to put various strategies into practice with all of these processes, so you’ll be ready for Section 2, where you’ll start engaging with poems on the second level of response.

In Section 1, you’ve also had the chance to write poems and write about poems. This should have helped give you insight into your own writing process as well as the writing processes of others. Finally, in this section you’ve touched on some of the ways in which poets use language—especially through metaphor. You’ll have the chance to expand this knowledge in Section 2.

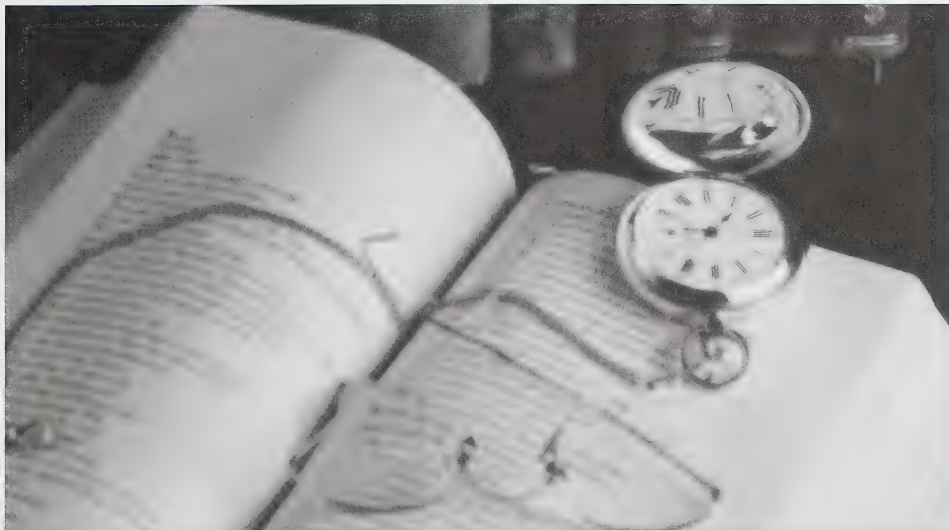
Section 2: Poetry Is Us

One of the most popular events hosted by the drama club was an afternoon of monologues. Students tracked down, rehearsed, and presented monologues of their own choice. For his performance, Daniel decided to do something different; he chose a poem by the African-American poet Langston Hughes. He researched Hughes' life—which he felt gave him better insight into the poem—and he even dressed up like Hughes. He came onto the stage and, speaking as if he were Hughes, provided some background to the poem. The students thought it was great. Monica was the only other student who used a poem for her monologue, but she chose to perform one of her own. When her friends listened to her poem about a teenager fighting depression and an eating disorder, they were stunned. Why hadn't Monica told them what was going on in her life? Monica had a lot of explaining to do after the performance. Yes, it was her own poem. No, she hadn't been writing about herself. Finally, they understood that she had *imagined* the events in the poem; the teenager she wrote about wasn't herself. Monica decided right then and there that next year she too would pick a Langston Hughes poem.

In Section 2, you'll take your first-level skills, developed in Section 1, to the second level by trying to find out why you had them. Second-level discussions about poetry will expand your vocabulary of poetic terms. You'll experiment with identifying the speaker and voice of a poem. You'll also examine your role in the poem as a reader and contemplate the complex relationship between poet, speaker, poem, and reader. Finally, you'll play with imagery and figure out how poets use it.

*Is Us Poetry Is Us
Poetry Is Us Poetry Is Us
Us Poetry Is Us
Poetry Is Us*

Lesson 1: Moving on Up



When they encounter a poem they enjoy, many people like to read it slowly, letting it sink in. They resent going back and picking it apart. Doing this, they feel, is sort of like dissecting a frog: you might learn something about the workings of the animal, but you have to destroy it in the process.

The reality is, though, that digging into a poem to see what makes it tick can be very informative. It's the process that begins the second level of reading. The trick is to try to do this without destroying the beauty of the poem and the power of your first-level response. When you go back and look closely at a poem, you make sure that you understand it and pick up on the subtleties that you may have missed the first time round. You also learn more about how a poem works, and that knowledge can enhance your experience of poetry in the future. Looking closely at a poem goes beyond your personal satisfaction; it puts you in touch with an ancient tradition.

If it helps, compare this process to studying music. You can just listen and enjoy it on one level, but you can also pay attention to the chords and notes and listen for things like key changes. This shouldn't destroy your personal connection to the music; rather, it should help you better appreciate it. It should also increase your ability to make music of your own.

The second level of response to a poem requires you to go back over the poem and see how it works. Think back to first-level responses in Section 1. To take these first-level reactions to the second level, the simple question that readers have to ask themselves is “Why?”

Sample First-Level Responses (What is my reaction?)	Sample Second-Level Responses (Why did I react that way?)
• Wow, this poem blows me away. • I hate this poem. • This image is great. • It grosses me out. • It's too stuffy for me. • It makes me feel sad. • I don't get it.	• The emotions it conveys are very powerful and complicated. • It seems totally removed from reality. • The writer provides an incredible amount of vivid detail. • The images are bloody, almost surgical. • The writer uses a lot of words I don't understand. • It sounds so lonely. • The second stanza is very confusing.



Ms. Kim: Now that you have an idea about responding to a poem on the second level, what kinds of things can you say about Mary Oliver's poem “Wild Geese”?

Tyson: Well, I like the image of wild geese because I always feel nostalgic when I see flocks flying south in those V-shapes. But the poem feels sort of sappy to me because of the references to home and family. It seems Mary Oliver makes this amazing thing in nature into something that's just about some human who feels sad.

Levi: For me the fact that she puts these two things together is what makes the poem interesting. On the one hand, there are the geese—part of a wild, natural world. And on the other hand, there's a human who feels lonely. It's almost as if she's saying “You're part of it. You're part of this natural world.”

Fiona: I like the way I could almost hear the geese. The poet emphasizes their call. She says that it's "harsh and exciting" and it repeats "over and over." It's almost as if the geese are asking you to follow them, but you're just stuck there on the ground.

Carmen: The aspects of nature were what I liked about the poem. The poet mentions other things like trees, prairies, mountains, and "clear pebbles of rain." What I don't really get is the opening. Who is she talking to when she says "you"? And I don't understand what she means by "the soft animal of your body."

The students in Ms. Kim's class have provided some ideas about how to take your reading of a poem to a second-level response. When you ask yourself why you reacted to the poem the way you did, you process the poem at a different—you might say deeper—level. Once you do this, you're looking at the actual words of the poet and trying to trace the effect that they create.

You probably noticed that the students didn't discard their first-level responses; rather, they built on them. It was probably also apparent that at the second level their responses became more detailed than their first-level responses in Section 1. A couple of the students actually quoted from the poem.

1.
 - a. Go back to your first-level response to "Wild Geese" in Section 1: Lesson 1 and identify **one** of the points you made in it. Using the examples provided by the students in Ms. Kim's class as a model, write a short second-level response in the form of a paragraph. Include at least one direct quotation from the poem.
 - b. What kinds of overlaps did you find between your first- and second-level responses to "Wild Geese" and those of the students in Ms. Kim's class?
 - c. How is creating a free-flow response different from writing a well-structured paragraph? How does each form affect your response?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 1 on page 173.



Responses and Writing



Writing Folder Suggestion 4E

In Section 1: Lesson 2, you reflected on the strategies that you use to read prose. Take a moment at this time to reflect on the approaches that you take to reading poetry. Use the following questions to guide you in your reflection:

- What do I want to get from reading a poem?
- How can I best get this?
- How receptive am I as a reader?
- Is the approach I take intuitive or methodical?
- How did I come to employ these strategies?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses in my approach?
- What strategies can I use to improve the way I read poetry?

A Quick Review of Reading and Response Strategies

Take a minute now to review the prereading, reading, and first-level response strategies that you explored in Section 1: Lesson 1. Remember that these strategies will work for any poem, no matter how long or how short. The order is flexible, and you'll find that some strategies are more applicable to certain poems than to others, so you can adapt them as you see fit. Many of the strategies overlap; for instance, during a first-level response you may find that you're already responding to second-level questions. You can also incorporate any personal strategies that you've already developed for yourself and find particularly effective.

Strategies for First-Level Responses to a Poem

So far, your first-level responses have probably been restricted to freewriting. While this provides a useful means of responding to a poem at the first level, there are many other options that you might want to try. Here are some of them:

- Mark up the poem by highlighting, underlining, or circling words (if it's a copy you're free to do this with).
- Map out the poem by means of a web or **concept map**, making associations between lines or words. Incorporate connections that you make between the poem and your own life.



concept map

a web or mind map that connects ideas related to a single idea by means of clusters surrounding it

- Draw what you see in the poem. You could draw a specific image that strikes you, or you could do a more abstract drawing using shapes and colours to convey the overall impression that you have of the poem.
- List questions that you have about the poem.
- List your favourite words in the poem.
- Use the poem to write a poem of your own. Simply write a poem in response to it or borrow an image or a line from it to jump-start your own poem.
- Make a visual, sculptural, or musical representation of the poem.

At the first level of response, anything that you do to make a connection to the poem is productive. Needless to say, you may not want to spend as much time at this stage as some of these projects require. Your preferred method of responding depends on the situation. If you're taking a test, for instance, it's probably not practical to start painting a representation of the poem, but non-stop writing would be quick and useful. On the other hand, if you have a whole class ahead of you and you have a lot of creative energy, recording a reading of a poem complete with background noises or music could be extremely satisfying and absolutely worthwhile.

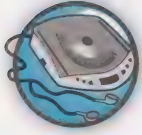


The next poem you'll be reading is by Winnipeg poet Sharanpal Ruprai. It's called "Canada Day Love Match."¹ You can also listen to an interpretation of this poem on the *English Language Arts 30-1 Audio CD*.

Writing Folder Suggestion 4F

Before reading the poem, write a few lines reflecting on its title and what it leads you to expect.

¹Sharanpal Ruprai, "Canada Day Love Match," in *Exposed* ed. Catherine Hunter (Winnipeg: J. Gordon Shillingford Publishing Inc., 2002), 66. Reproduced by permission.



Read and listen to the poem now. You can read it first, listen to it first, or do both together. When you're ready, respond to the questions that follow the printed version.

Canada Day Love Match

My mother stalked her future
son-in-law, convinced he was the one
for me. Through the crowd at the Forks Market,
she kept behind him like a cat ready to pounce.
I kept out of his line of sight. Blind
to us, he watched other women.
Red turban, sunglasses, shorts, and T-shirt,
a kara on his right hand—a true Canadian.
When I was a teenager, my mother
was much too strict. She kept
me in the closet, but I learned
from friends with older sisters
as my mom did when she grew up
in the heat of africa. My grandmother
married at fifteen, did not know desire,
and could not share it with her daughter.
I watch my mother, following him
to the parking lot to see what he drives.
She races after him, but he vanishes
in a sea of red and white hats.
She says, "next time we'll
get his phone number." We leave
empty-handed and walk to the bridge
to watch the fireworks. I close my eyes
and feel the eruption of silver sparks
electrify the sky.

1

2. Freewrite for one or two minutes in response to reading and hearing this poem.
3.
 - a. If you had to choose a piece of music—for example, a pop song or a symphony—to accompany this poem, what would it be?
 - b. If you had to choose a colour for this poem, what would it be?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 1 on page 174.

Now open Assignment Booklet 4A, turn to the Section 2 Assignment, and respond to question 1.

'Sharanpal Ruprai, "Canada Day Love Match," in *Exposed* ed. Catherine Hunter (Winnipeg: J. Gordon Shillingford Publishing Inc., 2002), 66. Reproduced by permission.

Writing at the First and Second Levels

There are many ways to react to poetry. In an academic context, it's important to be able to respond to a poem in writing. And writing can take many different forms.

Some ways of writing tend to be personal or “creative.” Others are more analytical and formal. Many pieces of writing that you produce in response to poetry will need to have a little of both elements.

As you move from first-level responses to second-level responses, the way you write will change. Free-flow writing is ideal for first-level responses since the ideas you're expressing are immediate, personal, and often emotional.



At the first level, there's no need to approach the poem in a particularly formal way. You should be able to have fun with it. You should pay attention to things that strike you. You should write responses that include gut feelings, as messy or intuitive as they may be. Your writing at the first level will reflect that messiness or that sense of fun.

Second-level responses require a slightly more formulated approach. Because you're moving from your first-level response, going back over the poem, and reflecting on your reactions a little more closely, your writing will probably be a little more careful. An actual paragraph with a topic sentence and some evidence from the poem will be sufficient for your second-level responses.

The following chart outlines how different forms of writing match different levels of reading. Keep in mind that these categories are very closely related and often overlap. They build on each other; for instance, to write a critical essay about a poem, it's still necessary to start with your first-level response. That means, for instance, that freewriting could play a part in writing a critical essay.



I see that the chart talks about third-level responses, but we haven't talked about them before.

Don't worry at this point about those third-level responses. You'll be getting into them later on.



Forms of Writing According to Response Levels		
First Level	Second Level	Third Level
free-flow writing	paragraph	explication/close reading
journaling	review	critical essay/response
webbing	personal essay	comparative essay
creating rough notes	parody/imitation	
highlighting	reply	
painting		
creative writing such as a poem or a script		

As you look at the preceding chart, keep track of how many forms of writing you already use. Which ones do you use most readily? Which ones are most familiar to you? Which ones don't you recognize at all? Don't panic about the unfamiliar ones; you'll have the chance to get to know them soon.

Another Poem

You're about to practise both your first- and second-level responses on a poem by the Canadian Writer Alden Nowlan—"A Note on the Public Transportation System."

Writing Folder Suggestion 4G

Comment in a few sentences on the title of the poem "A Note on the Public Transportation System." As you already know, this is an effective prewriting strategy that's good to use with any poem. You might use some of the following questions to guide your comments on the title:

- Is it a surprising title?
- What does it lead you to expect of the poem?
- Does it remind you of any other poems that you've read?



After you've read the poem once through silently, read it again aloud. Then answer the questions that follow the poem.

A Note on the Public Transportation System

It's not hard to begin
a conversation with the person
who happens to be seated
nearest you, especially when she's been
reading with apparent interest
a book that's one of your
favourites and can't find
her matches.

The difficulty is
once you've spoken you can never
go back to being comfortable
with silence,

even if you learn
you've nothing to say
and would rather not listen.

You can stop talking
but you can't forget
the broken wires
dangling there between you.

You'll smile almost guiltily
when your glances
accidentally bump.

It may get so bad
that one of you will have to
pretend to fall asleep.

4. a. How do you feel about Nowlan's poem? Is it a poem that speaks to you—that you can relate to from your own experience?
- b. Is there anything about this poem that puzzles you? If so, what is it?



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 1 on page 174.

¹ Alden Nowlan, "A Note on the Public Transportation System" in *I'm a Stranger Here Myself* (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 1974). Reproduced by permission of Claudine Nowlan.



I like the poem, partly because it's very straightforward. There aren't any words that you have to look up.

Yeah, it's a simple, everyday situation described in simple, everyday language. And I've been in exactly that situation; I know just how it feels.



But that's what I didn't like about it. It's such an everyday situation that it seems kind of boring. Is it really worth writing a poem about such an ordinary moment?

Yeah, it's ordinary but I like it because it connects to important things like human communication.



5. Refer to the list of first-level response strategies provided earlier in this lesson and choose **one** of them to use in response to Nowlan's poem. This could mean, for example, doing some non-stop writing, writing a poem, or writing a script.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 1 on page 174.

Now open Assignment Booklet 4A, turn to the Section 2 Assignment, and respond to question 2.

Once you've gone through prereading, reading, and first-level response, you move onto your second-level response. This is the time to look carefully at what it is in the poem that caused you to respond the way you did at the first level. For instance, you may have to ask yourself why ripping up the poem and mailing it in brown envelopes to five different continents felt like the best thing to do. If you painted it, was it because the poem seems really visual? If you recorded a reading with music or sound effects, was it because the poem is filled with sounds? If you love or hate the poem, can you figure out what makes you feel that way? If your grandparents came up in the web you drew, can you trace the reason back to the poem? If you read it to your little sister, do you know why? If you thought it was hilarious, take a look now at what made it so funny.

Strategies for Second-Level Responses to a Poem

Once you start answering these questions, you're well on your way. Here are some additional approaches to further your second-level response:

- Ask yourself what's going on here? Just what is the dramatic situation? What evidence do you find in this poem of the situation?
- Ask yourself who's speaking? What kind of person is the speaker? Who is he or she speaking to? How does the speaker feel about the situation?



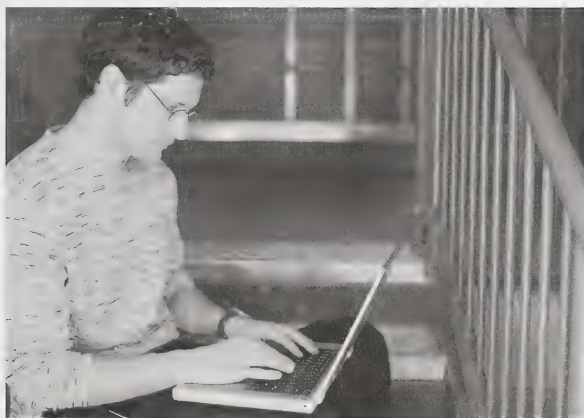
- Write down any phrases or lines that appeal to you. If you can, write down in a sentence or two why these words appeal.
- Ask yourself which words or images seem most powerful to you.
- Write down any words whose meanings you don't know. Look these words up in a dictionary and write down whichever meaning seems most appropriate for the poem.
- Write down any phrases or lines that puzzle or confuse you. Imagine the poet explaining what these troublesome lines mean.
- Decide if there are any shifts in the poem. Does the poem start and finish in the same way? Can you identify separate ideas?
- If any key words or phrases are repeated in the poem, write them down. Do they mean the same thing each time they're used? If the meanings change, write down what the changes are.



All of these activities are extremely useful. The first two points in particular are key to your second-level response. Any or all of these strategies can be used with a partner or in a group. Comparing your response with other people's responses can be a wonderful help in clarifying your own. As you finish your second-level response, you may want to go back and look at your first-level response to see if your ideas about the poem have changed at all.

6. Look carefully at your first-level response to Alden Nowlan's poem. Now write a short paragraph outlining your second-level response. Remember that a paragraph requires a topic sentence and some detail in order to support the topic sentence. Provide at least one quotation from the poem.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 1 on page 175.



Writing Folder Suggestion 4H



Consider your own experiences on public transportation in a big city or a small town, in a train, bus, plane, boat, or car. If you can't think of any experience you've had on public transportation, think about other situations when you've spent some time in an enclosed space with strangers—for example, in a waiting room, an elevator, or even a line-up for a movie or at a store.

What goes through your mind during the journey? Have you ever noticed a stranger who seems interesting, whose life you wondered about? Why did that particular person interest you? Have you ever struck up a conversation with a stranger in this situation? Has someone ever struck up a conversation with you? Did you enjoy talking with that person or not? How did you get out of the conversation if you didn't?

Write a short autobiographical piece in prose or in poetry about such a moment. Include as much detail as you can about how you were feeling, about the physical surroundings, about the other person or people, and about the conversation itself.



Ms. Kim: As you develop your second-level response skills, you'll start to notice the poetic techniques the poet uses. Did any of them strike you in Nowlan's poem?

Levi: A line I liked referred to the glances that "accidentally bump." It's as if the glances are concrete objects, or even people on the bus, bumping into each other when it stops or goes around a corner. It's almost like **personification**.

Fiona: The strongest image I found was "the broken wires dangling there between you." It really works as a metaphor. You can sense the conversation hanging, and it can't be repaired.

personification

the ascribing of human qualities to things that are not human

Tyson: I noticed that metaphor, too. The broken wires kind of rule the poem. The way the lines are set up, with such a big indent, they seem broken too. Nothing moves really smoothly in this poem.

Carmen: But the first lines aren't broken up. They move smoothly.

Levi: That's before he tries to talk to her. Everything is all right. It's just once he's spoken and discovered there's nothing to say that it becomes stiff and uncomfortable.

Carmen: It's not really an image, but I noticed the ending. It's kind of humorous when he says, "It may get so bad / that one of you will have to / pretend to fall asleep." It sounds so melodramatic, kind of exaggerated. That's hyperbole, isn't it?

Ms. Kim: Yes, exaggeration is hyperbole. Levi and Carmen referred to the person speaking in the poem as *he*. How do you know that it's a man?

Levi: Doesn't it say *he*?

Fiona: No, I checked and it actually doesn't say anywhere. I just thought it was a man because it seems as if he's being gallant, probably offering her a light when she can't find her matches.

Tyson: That vision is a little outdated now. And dangerous. When was this poem written?

Carmen: In 1974—that explains it. I thought it was a man just because the poet is a man and I assumed that he was talking about himself. Alden isn't a common name, but I'm pretty sure the poet is a guy.

Ms. Kim: The question of who is speaking is sometimes tricky. We often associate the writer with the **speaker**, which can be a mistake. We'll be talking more about that issue later.

The most important thing to remember right now is that when you make assumptions about the poem, you also have to look for evidence to support those assumptions. For instance, how do you know that it's a bus? It could also be a subway car. I don't think there's evidence pointing to one or the other.

On the other hand, what is Fiona's evidence that the person is being gallant and offering the other passenger a light? Well, it's mentioned in the poem that the person is looking for matches.

speaker

the narrator of a poem

7. As you've already realized, not a lot of detail is provided in Alden Nowlan's poem about the personalities of either of the characters. What do you know about them for sure?
8. If you chose to respond to Writing Folder Suggestion 4H, go back to it now. Did you consciously employ any poetic techniques such as personification, hyperbole, metaphor, or **simile**? Did you employ any without realizing it? Write out each example.

simile

an explicit comparison in which one thing is likened to another, signalled by the use of the words *as* or *like*



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 1 on page 175.

GOING FURTHER

If you enjoyed reading "A Note on the Public Transportation System," you might enjoy other poems by Alden Nowlan, one of Canada's pre-eminent poets. Your librarian will certainly be able to help you find more of his writings, and the Internet can supply you with both poems and biographical information.

In Lesson 1, you should have gained a clearer understanding of what it means to move from a first-level response to a second-level response to a poem. You should now understand that second-level responses require appropriate writing formats and an increased vocabulary. You've had the chance, in this lesson, to respond on both levels to a couple of poems. You've also started to review figures of speech used in poetry—such as hyperbole and personification. Finally, you were briefly introduced to the concept of *speaker* in Lesson 1.

Lesson 2 will provide you with a more in-depth exploration of the speaker's role.

Lesson 2: Speaker's Corner



First-level reading doesn't require any special vocabulary, because it's all about your feelings and reactions. You're probably already pretty articulate about those things. Once you start looking at a poem at the second level, however, it's important for you to know and identify a number of poetic terms and elements. One of the most important ones is the concept of *speaker*.

Poems create a moment of communication between the poet and reader, and that communication may take place across time, culture, language, and geography. As long as a poem gets written down or published somewhere (and, in some cases, translated), you can read it even if it's hundreds of years later or thousands of miles away.

In your life, whenever you hear someone speak, you build a picture of that person, even if you don't know him or her and even if you're not being addressed directly. You notice the way people look, how they talk, what kinds of gestures they use; and that leads you to make certain assumptions about them. This process is a little harder when you're faced with a poem; nonetheless, a poem always has a speaker, and engaging with the poem requires you to identify or imagine that speaker.

The speaker, who can also be referred to as the *persona* the poet has assumed, is the *I* of a poem, even if the poem isn't written in the first person. The speaker can sometimes be, in fact, the writer, but not always. For this reason, it's better to think of the speaker as a mouthpiece created by the writer.

In Lesson 1, students in Ms. Kim's class referred to the speaker of Alden Nowlan's poem as a man. Nowlan actually doesn't provide a lot of clues as to who the speaker is. For instance, he doesn't include a name or physical description. However, because of what the speaker says and does, those students pictured him a certain way, and probably you did too. Your picture might include elements like age, gender, race, and personality.

1. Go back to the poems that you've read in this module so far and see how easy it is to identify the speaker. Try to provide a one- or two-line description of each speaker.
 - a. "Wild Geese"
 - b. "Griffin of the Night"
 - c. "A Word on Statistics"
 - d. "A Loaf of Poetry"
 - e. "Canada Day Love Match"

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 2 on page 175.



Most poems give you some details as to the "personality" that's addressing you through the poem. This personality is often assumed to be the poet—which is the assumption that Monica's friends made in the Section 2 Introduction when they jumped to the conclusion that the depressed teenager in her poem was actually Monica. Often readers turn to the life of the poet in order to identify the speaker. It's true that details in poems may overlap with details of the writers' lives, but you can't automatically assume that the speakers and writers are the same people. It's more accurate to imagine the speaker as a dramatized version of the poet—someone who's a little bit distant from the poet or a mouthpiece created by the poet.

If you keep this difference in mind, life will be easier since you won't have to run around reading biographies of every single poet in order to understand every poem you read. Not that reading poets' biographies doesn't help sometimes. The point is that you don't *have* to know anything about a poet's life to identify the speaker. You can collect clues about the speaker right from the poem itself. As you cultivate your response skills, it will get easier to pick up on those details.

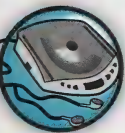
You're now about to read a poem in which the speaker definitely isn't the poet.



Use prereading and reading strategies for Paula Gunn Allen's "Pocahontas to Her English Husband, John Rolfe."¹ Then listen to the oral interpretation on the *English Language Arts 30-1 Audio CD*. The questions that follow the poem will guide your first- and second-level responses.



Writing Folder Suggestion 4I



Before reading, examine the title of the poem. Have you heard these names before? If you have heard of Pocahontas and John Rolfe, write a brief paragraph outlining what you know about them. Include an explanation of how you came to know this. If you don't know very much about them, write about your expectations just from hearing the names.



Pocahontas to Her English Husband, John Rolfe

Had I not cradled you in my arms,
oh beloved perfidious one,
you would have died.
And how many times did I pluck you
from certain death in the wilderness—
my world through which you stumbled
as though blind?
Had I not set you tasks
your masters far across the sea
would have abandoned you—
did abandon you, as many times they
left you to reap the harvest of their lies;
still you survived oh my fair husband
and brought them gold
wrung from a harvest I taught you
to plant: Tobacco. It
is not without irony that by this crop
your descendants die, for other powers
than those you know take part in this.

¹ Paula Gunn Allen, "Pocahontas to Her English Husband, John Rolfe," in *Skin and Bones* (Albuquerque: West End Press, 1996), 8–9. Reproduced by permission.

And indeed I did rescue you
not once but a thousand thousand times
and in my arms you slept, a foolish child,
and beside me you played,
chattering nonsense about a God
you had not wit to name;
and wondered you at my silence—
simple foolish wanton maid you saw,
dusky daughter of heathen sires
who knew not the ways of grace—
no doubt, no doubt.
I spoke little, you said.
And you listened less.
But played with your gaudy dreams
and sent ponderous missives to the throne
striving thereby to curry favor
with your king. I saw you well. I
understood the ploy and still protected you,
going so far as to die in your keeping—
a wasting, putrefying death, and you,
deceiver, my husband, father of my son,
survived, your spirit bearing crop
slowly from my teaching, taking
certain life from the wasting of my bones.

1



Wow, this speaker is definitely *not* the sweet and loyal Pocahontas that I saw in the movie.



I never did believe she was the way the movie made her out to be anyway.

How would you describe Pocahontas here?



Well, she sounds pretty angry and bitter. I think she's glad that John Rolfe's descendants are dying from using tobacco.



But it sounds as if she loves her husband, too. She calls him "oh beloved" and "oh my fair husband."



¹ Paula Gunn Allen, "Pocahontas to Her English Husband, John Rolfe," in *Skin and Bones* (Albuquerque: West End Press, 1996), 8–9. Reproduced by permission.

2. Write a freeflow, first-level response to this poem. Once your first-level reaction is down on paper, go ahead and answer the following questions.
3. Who is the speaker? What do you know about her from the poem?
4. What is the situation? Why do you think Gunn Allen chose this moment to write about?
5. Who is the speaker talking to? What do you learn about this person from the poem? List **at least three** things about him. Does it seem that he's actually present while she speaks?
6. How does your impression of Pocahontas and of Rolfe in the opening lines of the poem compare to your impression of them in the closing lines of the poem?
7. What is the most powerful or interesting line, word, or image for you? Why?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 2 on page 176.

GOING FURTHER

Over the centuries, writers and artists have been fascinated with the figure of Pocahontas. There has been a lot of discussion and disagreement about the ways in which she has been portrayed. If you'd like to learn more about her, here are some questions that you might use for your exploration:

- Why do think North American culture is so taken with Pocahontas? Do you think that Paula Gunn Allen has the same reasons? (It might interest you to know that the poet is herself part Sioux.) Do you think that her feelings as expressed in this poem represent those of her people, or are they purely personal?
- Pocahontas has been represented in numerous forms including paintings, poems, silent movies, cartoons, and package labels. If you can find another piece of writing or art featuring Pocahontas, use it to compare to Gunn Allen's poem.
- Research the story of Pocahontas. Is the information you find reliable or controversial? Are there any gaps in it? How might Gunn Allen's poem be filling in a gap or correcting a misunderstanding?



soliloquy

in drama, a speech delivered by a character alone on stage expressing his or her thoughts and feelings

dramatic monologue

in poetry, a speech delivered by one specific character and usually addressed to an imaginary audience



It almost seems as if this poem is a **soliloquy**. It makes me think of an actor alone on stage thinking out loud.

A **dramatic monologue**—which is what this poem is—isn't that different from a soliloquy. Paula Gunn Allen harnesses a lot of power by adopting the voice of a character who speaks directly to the audience, revealing her state of mind, thoughts, and feelings without any intervention.



GOING FURTHER

Imagine that Paula Gunn Allen had given John Rolfe the chance to interrupt Pocahontas. At what points would he have interrupted? What would he have said? Write **three** different interruptions in the voice of John Rolfe and indicate where each one would be inserted into the poem. How will his words be different from those of Pocahontas?

In many poems, the speaker isn't full-blown like this; there may just be a hint or sense of a presence or personality behind the words. On the contrary, the speaker in a dramatic monologue is clearly defined since he or she gets to talk the whole time. The presence of an implied audience (like Rolfe) helps develop the identity of the speaker.

Writers of dramatic monologues face the challenge of moving out of their own lives, or known experiences, into unknown experiences. These writers have to deal with certain limitations—what they write must be inside the confines of the imagined speakers. These poets write only what they imagine can be seen through the eyes of those characters. Working within these limits can present a challenge to writers.

Some believe that this is the job of writers—to efface themselves completely so as to be able to speak in the voices of entirely different people. Other critics and writers believe that no one, no matter how vivid his or her imagination, can completely erase his or her own identity. This implies that poems are always written through the filter of the poet, even if that person is trying to see through the eyes of a different character.

Writing Folder Suggestion 4J

Try this process out right now. If you wrote a piece in the preceding lesson about encountering someone on public transport, rewrite that moment from the eyes of the stranger. Remember, this means that you become the stranger. How is that person looking at you? After you've finished writing, reflect on the process. Do you think that you were successful? How easy was it to step outside yourself? Was it possible to do it completely? What kinds of problems did you encounter?



8. Do you think that your imagination has limits? If it helps, think back to the Section 2 introduction where you encountered Daniel who adopted the persona of Langston Hughes in order to present one of his poems and Monica who wrote a poem about an experience that she hasn't had herself. If possible, instead of writing out a response to this question, discuss it with a partner or in a group.

For helpful comments, see the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 2 on page 178.



Carmen: I remember reading a dramatic monologue last year—"My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning. I think it would be fun to write a dramatic monologue. There are so many characters that you could explore. I'd definitely pick someone who has a more interesting life than mine!

Levi: I agree. I mean, there are a lot of historical figures whose lives are really fascinating. All those moments that get paved over in history textbooks. For instance, how about a monologue in which Louis Riel is talking with his wife before a battle? Or Rosa Parks could be talking to the bus driver who wanted her to change seats.

Ms. Kim: It's interesting that you should mention Louis Riel. There have been a couple of poets who imagined what his last words were, but they were addressed to the jury who condemned him.

Fiona: You could even use characters from literature or movies. Now that I think of it, I just came across a poem by a writer named Sujata Bhatt who wrote a poem "Jane to Tarzan."

lyric poetry

poetry written in ancient times to be accompanied by the lyre; modern poems that are usually short and emphasize a particular moment, image, thought, or emotion through the eyes of a single speaker

dramatic poetry

poetry in which an imagined character speaks directly without any narration by the writer

narrative poetry

poetry—like ballads, epics, and romances—that tells a story complete with character and plot



Tyson: That's crazy! I guess I assumed that most poets write about themselves. So many poems that I've read seem to be autobiographical, about ordinary things. When you read them, you often feel like oh, that could be me.

Ms. Kim: That's because contemporary poets tend to write lyric poems. The purpose of **lyric poetry** is to reveal a particular moment, image, or emotion as opposed to creating a character or telling a story. Lyric poetry can incorporate narrative or dramatic elements. Sometimes people even refer to poems as **dramatic poetry** or **narrative poetry**.

GOING FURTHER

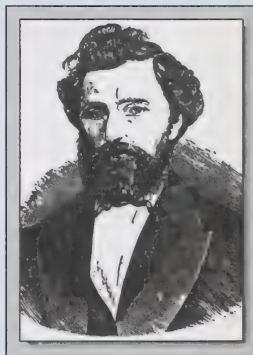
- Exercise your creative powers and build a speaker yourself. Choose a historical or literary character and write a poem or prose piece adopting that person's voice. If you'd like to make it into a full-fledged dramatic monologue, imagine a specific intended audience—the “you” that the speaker of your poem is addressing.
- If you're interested in seeing how two different poets have portrayed Louis Riel, here are the titles and writers. Both poems are available on the Internet.

– John Robert Colombo, “The Last Words of Louis Riel” from his book *Abracadabra* published in 1967

<http://members.aol.com/CanLit/Coteau/Morrissey/Rielcolombo.htm>

– Kim Morrissey, “Louis Riel's Address to the Jury” from her book *Batoche* published in 1989

<http://members.aol.com/CanLit/Coteau/Morrissey/Riel.htm>



In Lesson 2, you've worked through the concept of *speaker* and practised identifying the speaker of a poem. You've become familiar with a form of poetry known as the dramatic monologue and you may even have tried your hand at writing a monologue of your own.

In Lesson 3, you'll continue to examine the question of speaker and writer.

Lesson 3: Poetry and Autobiography



Dramatic monologues can be fun to work with because they provide such a strong sense of the speaker. In many poems, the speaker isn't nearly as well defined and often isn't as clearly differentiated from the poet. Obviously, this doesn't detract from the poem; it simply produces a different kind of experience. While an experienced reader of poetry never assumes that a poem directly reflects the experience of the poet, it's crucial to recognize that poets do frequently turn to their own lives as a source of inspiration and, in doing so, try to speak in a voice that's openly their own.

1. Imagine a poet writing a poem just as himself or herself. Will the result always be genuine? Can you imagine any difficulties that might arise?

For helpful comments, see the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 3 on page 178.

A Word About Confessional Poetry

After World War II in North America, a movement of poetry emerged that featured the personal—and often painful—details of the poet's life; this kind of lyric poetry eventually became known as **confessional poetry**. This approach to writing poetry, which flowered in the 1950s and '60s, was quite different from that of the previous generation of poets, who tended to write poetry that was quite impersonal—including only the slimmest details of their own lives. The subject material of confessional poems was often raw and disturbing.

confessional poetry

a fairly recent movement in poetry in which poets feature the drama of their own lives, often revealing intimate and painful detail

pathos

a strong sense of pity or sadness that is evoked by powerful writing or art

bathos

the trite, sentimental results of a writer's or artist's failure to achieve pathos

Obviously, *what* poets revealed in their poetry wasn't the only important element of confessional poetry. The *how* was important as well. Poets wrote about their lives with tremendous dexterity and skill. Their powerful language enabled them to create **pathos** as opposed to **bathos**. As you probably already know, reading about someone else's confused or painful life can at times be boring, sentimental, and even maudlin. One thing that most readers want is to be moved by what they read, and this demands skilful writing.

It's now a common practice in many languages and across many continents for poets to use details from their own lives when they write. Many poets use details from their own lives to place their poems' speakers (who may or may not be versions of the poets themselves) into particular moments from which observations are made or insights are revealed—whether they're difficult, crazy, interesting, complicated, dishonest, or terrifying.

Writing Folder Suggestion 4K

Try your hand at either of the following creative-writing activities:

- Think of a moment in your life about which you'd like to write a short poem or prose piece. To write about that particular moment, create a speaker who's like you but not exactly you. How will that speaker be like you? How will you differentiate yourself from that speaker? Do you have a particular audience in mind as you write about that moment? Are there certain things that you'll keep hidden from the audience?
- Write a poem, perhaps about a moment in your life, featuring a speaker who claims to be honest but may be lying. How does the speaker try to convince the reader that he or she is honest? What kinds of clues does this speaker give the reader to indicate that he or she may be lying? Can you think of situations in which a poet might want to create a speaker who is dishonest? Remember what you know about unreliable narrators.

Rubbing Elbows with Poets

The way in which you, as a reader, interrelate with a poet through his or her poem depends on what you want from a poem. There's a whole approach to poetry that doesn't consider the poet an important part of the equation. The poem, once it's written, is seen as a little world unto itself, a free-floating piece of art that's as unattached to anyone or to the world as a crystal ball floating through the air. In this approach to poetry, the reader's job is to look into that crystal ball to observe the beauty of it and to extract what universal truths are to be found there. This is part of a broader attitude toward art that places the artist in an elevated position, uncontaminated by the world.

A more popular way of looking at poems sees the writers as flesh and blood—people who can't help but be influenced by the world around them. Yes, readers see a poem as a piece of writing that's able to stand on its own, but they acknowledge that it's also rooted in the world and has a connection to the writer.



This doesn't mean that a poem is regarded as merely an extension of the writer; a poem, in a sense, does have a life of its own. A reader may notice something about the poem that the writer didn't notice. A reader may interpret the poem very differently from what the writer expected. A poet can't control the experience that a reader may have of the poem.

The reader's relationship with the poet and with the speaker is a complicated one. Unless you're friends with a poet and know him or her personally, the meeting ground between you and the poet is the poem. The poem may have lots of complexities, but it's not the only thing that does. Both you and the poet are human beings with vast numbers of experiences and facets. Think back to Daniel and his representation of Langston Hughes. He lives in a different age and a different country, and he's a different race. Yet, somehow he can still "meet" Langston Hughes and "hear" his words. Daniel took an even more complicated step by choosing to represent Hughes dramatically. Despite differences, the performance was successful. Would it have made a difference if Daniel were African-Canadian? Euro-Canadian? A woman? An American citizen? Older? These are questions that you have to consider.

You may relate to what a poet says because you've shared an experience revealed in a poem. You may have similar experiences and backgrounds, or you may have totally different ones. The social, historical, and cultural backgrounds of writers will in part determine what they write and how they write about it. Your social, historical, and cultural background will in part determine how you relate to that writing. The following Venn diagram provides you with a clearer model of this relationship. After you've looked at it, respond to the questions that come after it.



1

¹ LITERATURE AND SOCIETY: AN INTRODUCTION TO FICTION, POETRY, DRAMA, . . . 3/E by Annas/Rosen, ©. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc. Upper Saddle River, NJ.

2. Think about the idea of a “social and historical context.” What elements make up a person’s “social and historical context”?
3. Draw and fill in a Venn diagram using a poem and poet that you know. If you want, you can choose a poem and poet from this module.
4. Have you ever read a poem that was completely outside of your experience? Did you enjoy it or not?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 3 on page 178.

A Real, Live Poet—Iman Mersal



You spend a lot of time looking at poems on a page. The opportunity to meet the poets whose work you’re reading is pretty rare. It can be exciting to hear writers read their poetry as well as to hear what they have to say about their own writing and about poetry in general. You can benefit both as a reader and a writer of poetry.

You’re about to meet a poet and read some of her poems. Iman Mersal is an internationally recognized poet from Egypt who now lives in Edmonton. She’s published several volumes of poetry that have been translated into Hebrew, French, German, English, and Spanish. Translating poetry, by the way, is an art in itself. As you can imagine, translators face many challenges. Not only does the meaning of the words have to come through but some sense of the images, rhythm, and sound as well.

The following poems are from a longer series called “The Clot,” which was written after Mersal’s father suffered a heart attack.

5. Glance quickly at each of the four poems. Note the title and the length of each. What are your immediate impressions?

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 3 on page 179.

Simply Sleeping

He bites his lips suppressing an anger
caused by reasons he cannot recall.
He sleeps deeply,
the palms holding his head up
make him look like the soldiers
dozing in midnight trucks
as they shut their eyelids
on piles of surveillance pictures
letting their souls spin
until they suddenly turn into angels.¹

That's Good

The volunteers' shoulders
carried the man from the bed next to yours
to the public graveyard.

That's good for you.

Death cannot repeat its deed
in the same room
on the same night.²

Resemblance

To help me buy "translated poems"
this deep sleeper convinced me
that his wedding band constricts his finger.
He continued smiling as we left the jeweler's,
while I'm telling him
his nose looks nothing like mine.³

Dividers

Usually the windows are gray
and splendid in their width
allowing the bed-ridden
to view the traffic below
and the weather outside.

Usually the doctors have sharp noses
and eyeglasses
that fix the distance between them and pain.

Usually relatives leave
flowers at room entrances
along with prayers seeking forgiveness
from their future dead.

Usually unadorned women
walk the hallway tiles,
and sons stand under light fixtures
clutching x-ray files
affirming that cruelty can fade
if only their parents had more time.

Usually everything recurs
and the wards are filled with new bodies
as if a punctured lung
is sucking away all the world's oxygen
leaving all these chests
short of breath.⁴



Now read the poems through. Take your time and savour the mood and the imagery in each one individually. Read the poems more than once. Open yourself to the impact of each poem on its own and to the collection as a group.

¹ Iman Mersal. Poems first published in Arabic in the collection *A Dark Alley is Suitable for Learning to Dance* (Cairo: Dar Sharkiat, 1995). Translated into English by Khaled Mattawa, 2000. Reproduced by permission.

² Ibid. Reproduced by permission.

³ Ibid. Reproduced by permission.

⁴ Ibid. Reproduced by permission.

Writing Folder Suggestion 4L

Create a free-flow response to the poems you've just read. You can choose to write about just one poem, each poem in turn, or all of them in general. You might want to consider the following questions first:

- What is it like reading more than one poem by the same writer? Have you ever done it before? How is it different from just reading one poem by a poet?
- What is it like reading more than one poem on the same subject? Have you ever done it before? Were there any similarities between the poems?

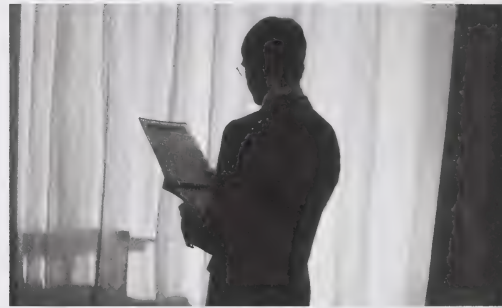


The following questions are based on the poems by Iman Mersal. If possible, rather than writing out responses, discuss the questions with your study partner or in a group.

6. What are the strongest images of these poems for you? In your response to this question, refer to specific lines and be sure to quote them accurately.
7. a. What does the title "Dividers" refer to?

b. If you had to choose an alternative title for this poem, what would it be?
8. a. The hospital plays a central role in these poems. What picture is created of it?

b. Do the poems ever allow readers to get out of the hospital? Explain your response.
9. How much emphasis is placed on family in these poems? How is family referred to?
10. How would you describe the speaker of these poems? Does the speaker seem to change?
11. Overall, the poems may be seen as sad and serious, but are there any points of joy in them?



12. If you had to illustrate, film, or compose a musical score for one of these poems, which poem would it be and how would you do it?
13. Can you imagine writing personal poems about a family member? What issues might arise if you published them or performed them publicly?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 3 on page 179.

Now read the following interview with the poet Iman Mersal. This is a conversation with a thoughtful, serious writer; so be prepared to pay close attention and to really think about what she says. You may want to read some of what she says more than once. When you're ready, respond to the questions that follow the discussion.



Levi: Could you describe the circumstances under which you wrote these poems?

Iman Mersal: Several years ago my father had a heart attack and he spent twelve days in intensive care. These poems are in response to that experience.

Levi: Does that mean that you wrote them during the time that he was in hospital?

Iman Mersal: No, I wrote them several months later, after he had recovered. The moment is fixed but you don't necessarily write about it at that time. With time, I could see the complicated relationship that I have with my father. If I had written while the pain was fresh, the poems would have reflected that. They would have been clear cut, simple, and nostalgic. They wouldn't have an edge.

Levi: So actually you don't write about feelings?

Iman Mersal: I would say that I'm not interested in writing *only* about feelings. What I want to write about are questions. I don't write just for therapy. I write to try to uncover those complexities. I mean, there are hundreds of moments every day but you don't write about every moment. One moment sticks. The door closes behind you hundreds of times but one time it will close and it won't be ordinary. I won't be able to get rid of that moment.

Levi: How does your poetry fit into the traditions of Arabic poetry?

Iman Mersal: There is a history in Arabic poetry of poets being philosophers and writing about big ideas, expounding on their opinions and ideologies—almost like prophets. I'm not that kind of writer. I look for the dark spots and try to discover them. I'm interested in details, not in large theories. I don't understand more than others.

I don't want to use poetry as a platform for ideology or for playing with language. I write poetry in order to find my place in the landscape. I'm trying to figure out where I should put my eyes when I come to write about this unique moment or complicated feeling. I mean, if you try to write about truth, you can never be sure that you have it. If you write about your own questions, at least it's yours.

Levi: What poetry influenced you as you were growing up?

Iman Mersal: As a child I heard songs and poetry for festivals. It wasn't intellectual poetry. Then when I was older I discovered El-Mutanabi, a great Arabic poet from the tenth century. He moved from country to country and lived in the court writing poetry about love and life. His poetry rhymes and it's in beautiful, elevated language. I just read it by chance and I couldn't believe it. The poetry was centuries old but I felt he could communicate to me as if I knew him. I had a complete picture of him in my head.

From that point on I started to look for poetry and I read every kind and quality I could find. At one point, I came across poems by the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish who writes in free verse, and I was shocked. In terms of language and structure, this contemporary poetry was just the opposite of the ancient poetry that I had been reading. He included detail in his poems and I had never seen that before.

Levi: What would you say is the difference between writing poetry and prose?

Iman Mersal: Writing prose gives you the chance to live with characters over a period of time. It's not about discovery; it's about building or stacking. I find that writing a prose narrative is more flexible and less urgent than poetry. It seems more suitable to the funny stories about childhood that I would like to tell.

Levi: What questions come up for you in terms of language since you write in Arabic and now live in Canada?

Iman Mersal: The Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai says something to this effect: If you are scared and alone in the dark and you don't say "mama" immediately, then you are an orphan.

In a way, I feel that I am an orphan. Arabic is there for me but it's in a drawer and I have to open the drawer and grab it when I want to use it. It doesn't mean that I don't have problems with my own language. I struggle a lot with the Arabic because it is the formal language of the Koran, which historically has been the source of all metaphors for poets. As a poet writing in Arabic today, that is what I have to face.

Actually, a whole generation of poets is struggling with it right now, from Morocco to Iraq—the 90s generation. There are many poets writing in colloquial languages but then they can only be understood in that little area. The poets in my generation are trying to use standard Arabic to be individuals, not prophets.

14. Go back and read the poems by Iman Mersal. Does reading the interview with the poet who wrote them change the way you look at them? If so, explain how.
15. What do you think of her vision of writing poetry? Does it coincide with your own vision or with any other definition that you've come across in this module?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 3 on page 181.

GOING FURTHER

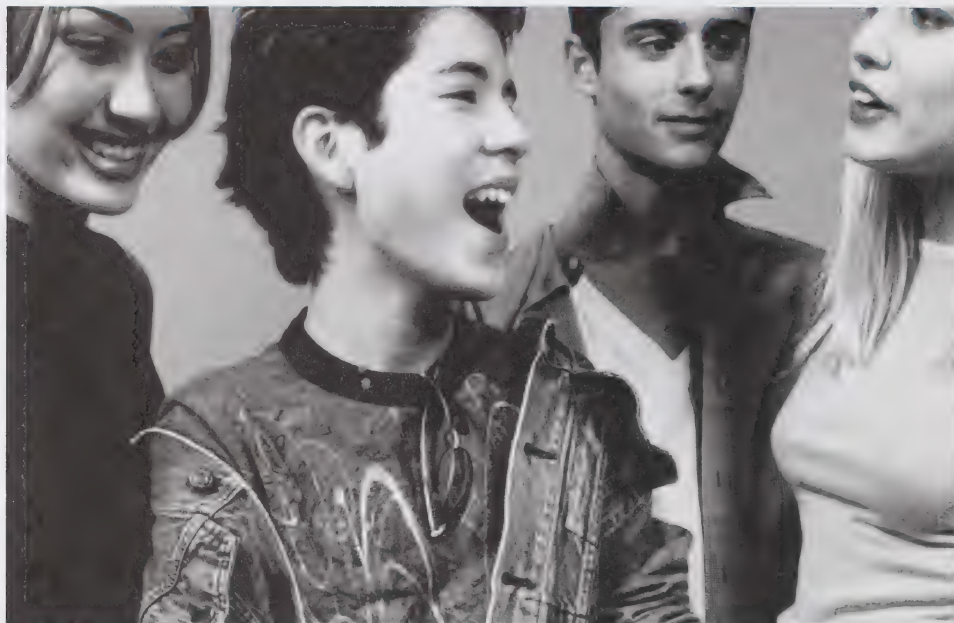
If you would like to find out more about El-Mutanabi, Mahmoud Darwish, Yehuda Amichai, or Iman Mersal herself, search the Internet.

In Lesson 3, you've spent a good deal of time thinking about the role of the poet and how it interacts with the speaker and you, the reader. You've examined various issues about the position of the speaker and the poet and you've had the chance to hear a poet talk about her work.

In the next lesson, you'll turn to a concept that's come up several times already in this course—voice in writing. This time, of course, the focus will be voice in writing poetry.



Lesson 4: A Look at Tone



By the time you're in high school, you're probably an expert at interpreting what people say to you through both verbal and non-verbal signals. For instance, if you ask a friend how he is and he says "fine" in a very abrupt manner and then quickly looks away, you might guess that he really isn't fine but doesn't want to talk about it. If you ask your sister about the game on the weekend and she says "amazing" with a certain intonation while rolling her eyes, you'll understand that she's being sarcastic and the game wasn't really that great.

As you already know from your exploration of the concept of *speaker* earlier in this section, one of the challenges to reading poetry is that the writer isn't in front of you to give you these kinds of signals. Instead, the writer may incorporate signals of different sorts into the poem, and readers must learn to watch for them. The writer may not be present, but the speaker is and so is the tone he or she is using. You can probably guess that these two elements are closely connected.



Tyson: I remember talking about tone earlier on, but could you please go over the basics again?

Ms. Kim: Imagine a speaker like Pocahontas. What would you say her tone is?

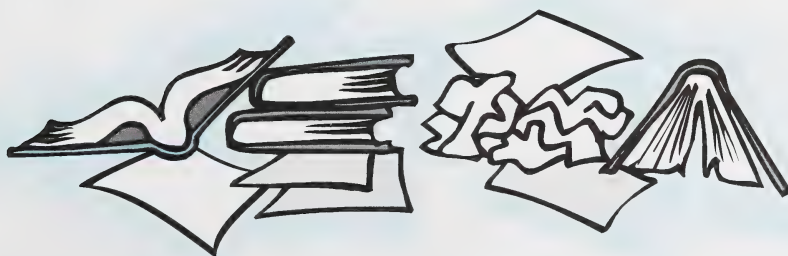
Carmen: I'd say that her tone is angry. I mean, she wants justice, even revenge. It's as if this poem is her punishment to John Rolfe.

Fiona: I think she's condescending toward him. She seems to be sneering at him for being such a helpless goof.

Ms. Kim: Right, but what if Paula Gunn Allen had imagined Pocahontas differently? What if she had imagined her as pathetic? Naïve? Afraid? Worn out? Crazy? Still totally in love with Rolfe? The poem would have had the same speaker, but the tone would have been very different.

Levi: Okay, so the speaker is the person talking and the tone is what mood he or she is in that day.

Ms. Kim: State of mind or attitude might be a better way of putting it—the attitude that comes through. Think back to Iman Mersal's poems. Though we might assume that the speaker is the same in each of the four poems, the tone isn't necessarily the same for each one, is it?



Writing Folder Suggestion 4M



This writing activity works best with at least one other person. Two or three more would be best. Sit together at a table or desk in the same room. The first thing you have to do is simply imagine. Look at the following two options and, without telling the other writers, pick one of them to imagine. Visualize it in as vivid detail as possible.

- Remember or imagine an absolutely horrible day that you've actually had or could have had sometime in your life. The reason that it was bad doesn't matter—you lost your homework, your boss fired you, you had a fight with a friend—you just have to tap into that frame of mind. Concentrate for a minute or two on the details of that day and the feelings that you had. Imagine that you're right in the middle of it.
- Remember or imagine an absolutely wonderful day, perhaps the best day of your life. It's a wonderful day for whatever reason—you passed a major test; you made the team; you won a trip; you've got a new job. Concentrate for a minute or two on the details of that day and imagine as closely as you can how you were feeling. Imagine that you're actually in that day.

Now, in your imagined mindset, look at the room around you and write a description of it. The descriptions don't have to be long—a paragraph will do.

Once everyone has finished writing, share your descriptions with each other, but don't reveal the option you chose before writing. Let the others figure it out for themselves. Do you learn anything about tone?

Sometimes tone is easy to identify in a poem and sometimes it's not. Tone depends on a number of factors—the speaker, the speaker's attitude toward the audience, and the speaker's attitude toward the subject of the poem.

Audience

When someone is speaking to you, you can usually tell what that person's attitude toward you is. It might be subtle—not necessarily a love/hate thing. It's probably also governed by social norms. For instance, if a teacher is speaking to you, there's probably a certain level of authority. If your grandmother is speaking to you, there might be some authority but less distance. If it's a good friend who's talking to you, there's likely no authority at all but a lot more intimacy.

When you're identifying the tone of a poem, you're asking yourself, okay, how is the speaker connecting to me? Here are some sample questions you can ask yourself that may help you identify the tone:

- Is it a tone of authority?
- Is it an intimate tone?
- Is it someone who's talking to me as though I have authority?
- Am I being treated like a confidant?
- Am I being addressed directly?
- Is the speaker talking down to me? Up to me?
- Is the speaker addressing someone else and I'm allowed to overhear?



Every poem has an audience. It may be explicit or implicit or both. The speaker, for example, may address the reader directly in the second-person *you*. Or the speaker may talk to some imagined audience while the reader merely “witnesses” the exchange, as you’ve seen done in dramatic monologues.

Subject

A similar series of questions has to be asked about the speaker's attitude toward the subject of the poem. When you identify the tone of a poem, you're pinpointing the speaker's point of view as well.

Writing Folder Suggestion 4N

Take a moment to play with point of view and see for yourself how it can affect a piece of writing. Write a few lines of poetry or prose in response to both of the following situations:

- You're very tiny. Picture yourself in a specific location, a place where a tiny person might find himself or herself—inside a teapot, beside a boot, or stuck among dandelions on the lawn, for example. Using as much concrete detail as you can, describe what you see and experience at that location.
- Now you're enormous. Again, imagine yourself in a specific location—one more appropriate to a giant. Using as much concrete detail as possible, describe what you see and experience at that location.

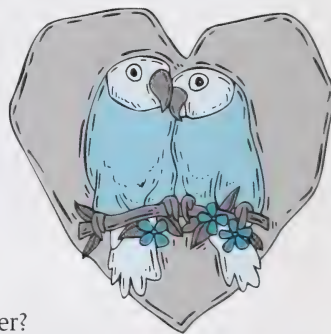
If you responded to the preceding Writing Folder suggestion, as a tiny person you probably spent a great deal of time looking up. Your scope was probably very limited. As a giant, you probably spent a great deal of time looking down though your scope would have been much larger. How did that affect what you saw and the way you described it?

It's common practice to use physical location to describe not just a person's geographical placement but also attitudinal or "emotional" position. For instance if you admire someone, you *look up* to that person. If you don't admire someone, you might *look down* on him or her.

When you're reading a poem, you ask yourself, "Where does the speaker position himself or herself not only in relation to me but also to the subject of the poem? Is the speaker in the middle of it? To the side of it? Above or below it? Does the speaker deal with it from a distance or close up?"

For example, imagine the number of ways in which a speaker could talk about love.

1. Think of all the **clichés** you can about love, and list them on paper. Use them to write a short poem or prose piece suitable for the inside of a greeting card.
2. What is the attitude toward love in the short poem you just wrote? How would you describe the tone that you adopted?
3. Does this vision of love match what you really think about love? Describe what you really think about love in a few lines of poetry or prose.
4. How would you describe the tone that you employed for this piece of writing? Was it different from the tone you used in the piece you wrote earlier?



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 4 on page 182.



You'll see what poet Dorothy Parker has to say about love in her poem "One Perfect Rose" written in 1929. Before you read the poem, think about the title and the vision of love that it suggests. As you read the poem, think about how closely the attitude of the speaker toward love matches or doesn't match your own.

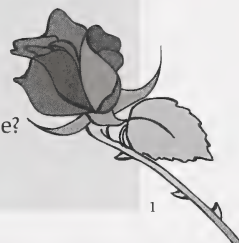


One Perfect Rose

A single flower he sent me, since we met.
All tenderly his messenger he chose;
Deep-hearted, pure, with scented dew still wet—
One perfect rose.

I knew the language of the floweret;
“My fragile leaves,” it said, “his heart enclose.”
Love long has taken for his amulet
One perfect rose.

Why is it no one ever sent me yet
One perfect limousine, do you suppose?
Ah no, it's always just my luck to get
One perfect rose.



5. Did this poem hold any surprises? What is the attitude toward love shown in it?
6. Describe what you know about the speaker. Refer to specific lines in the poem to support your impression.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 4 on page 183.

Poetry Out Loud

Reading a poem aloud often leads the reader to a clearer idea of what the tone of the poem is. To read a poem effectively out loud, it's important to consider a number of elements. Examine the following chart.

Some Suggestions for Reading a Poem Out Loud	
Pronunciation	Do you know how to pronounce all of the words? Get advice or look them up in the dictionary if you don't. Pay attention to any contractions or dropped syllables; for instance <i>flow'r</i> is pronounced differently than <i>flower</i> .
Articulation	Are you speaking the words clearly and distinctly? Avoid slurring or swallowing words or dropping endings unless there's evidence in the poem that suggests you're meant to.
Volume	Are you speaking loudly or softly? Is the volume appropriate to the poem? Are there moments when the volume should increase or decrease?

¹ “One Perfect Rose,” from DOROTHY PARKER: COMPLETE POEMS by Dorothy Parker, copyright (c) 1999 by The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Used by permission of Penguin, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

Rate	How fast should you be reading this poem? Does the speed ever increase or decrease? Are there moments when a pause is required? Pay attention to the clues left by the poet such as line breaks and punctuation.
Tone	Does your tone vary according to the words? For example, are you speaking in a whisper, whine, or shriek? Is your voice deep, strong, weak, feeble, high, or wavering?

Here are some additional questions to ask yourself as you plan your oral reading:

- What are the most important words in the poem? Should they be emphasized? How?
- Is there any irony in the poem, or is the speaker earnest?
- Is there any shift in attitude throughout the poem? How can it be represented?
- Is there any repetition of words or phrases? Are they always repeated in the same way?
- Has the poet used capitalization, boldface, or italics to emphasize certain words?



7. Alone or with a partner plan an oral reading of “One Perfect Rose.” Describe in writing how you think this poem should be read, and then rehearse it. Don’t be afraid to go overboard; hamming it up can sometimes (but not always!) produce a clear, strong reading. Then round up an audience to listen to your reading.
8. How would you describe the tone of the poem?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 4 on page 183.

Describing Tone

If you feel uncertain about identifying tone in poetry, you may be tempted to choose very generic terms to describe it. If you find a poem easily understandable, you may tend to describe the tone using words like *factual*, *straightforward*, or *clear*.

Likewise, if you find the poem difficult to understand, you may refer to the tone as *dense* or *incomprehensible*. These words may be accurate, but they’re very general and don’t provide much insight into the personality of the speaker and his or her attitudes.

Try to choose words that are as specific, vivid, and accurate as possible. In previous modules, you've encountered adjectives that can be useful in describing the tone of a writer. Here's another such list of adjectives that seem particularly useful to describe the tone a speaker adopts in a poem:

- | | | | |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| • ironic | • congenial | • objective | • confidential |
| • sympathetic | • snide | • earnest | • gentle |
| • angry | • diffident | • playful | • condescending |
| • sarcastic | • flippant | • cold | • casual |
| • serious | • didactic | • bold | • timid |

9. Are there any words on this list whose meaning you don't know? If so, look them up.

For helpful comments, see the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 4 on page 183.

Poetry for the Common Person

Are you by any chance aware that cities around the world have started exhibiting the work of local poets in public spaces such as subway stations and buses? Society today is generally used to reading poetry only in books. What do you think about the concept of putting poetry up in buses? Why would a city or town do this? What value do you think it has? Can you think of other public spaces where it might be a good idea? Have you ever been surprised to find poetry in a slightly odd or unusual place?



What follows is one poem that was featured by the Edmonton Transit System in its buses and trains. It's titled "Memo to the Employees of Mother Nature" and was written by a poet who usually calls himself simply Jocko. Read this short poem now; then respond to the questions that follow it.

Memo to the Employees of Mother Nature

This is to inform the flora and fauna,
The elements and the minerals of Mother Nature
That the parent company has gone bankrupt.
Too long in arrears providing food and water,
Too inconsistent in its management
Nature has let slide its market share of the world.

1

¹ Jocko Benoit, "Memo to the Employees of Mother Nature," in *An Anarchist Dream* (Edmonton: Raccoon's Den Publishers, 1997). Reproduced by permission.

10. a. What is going on in “Memo to the Employees of Mother Nature”? Describe the situation in a line or two.
- b. Who is speaking?
- c. Who is the audience?
- d. Comment on the title of the poem.
- e. Is there anything remarkable about the language of the poem?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 4 on page 183.

GOING FURTHER



Since 1999 many poets, including junior high and high school students, have been featured in Edmonton Transit’s “Take the Poetry Route” program. The poems have ridden around the city on the inside advertising panels of city buses and Light Rail Transit cars where commuters can read and enjoy them. If you’d like to read other poems from Take the Poetry Route, you can find them at the following website:

http://www.gov.edmonton.ab.ca/transit/about_edmonton_transit/poetry_on_ets.html

You might also investigate poetry on public transport in other cities such as Toronto (Poetry on the Way) or Vancouver (Poetry in Transit).

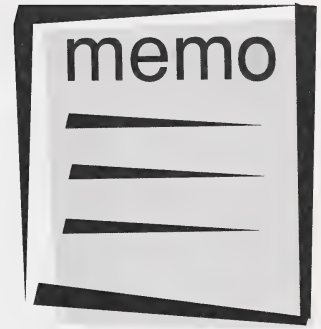
A Look at Diction

Tone is closely related to diction, or the kind of language that a poet employs. The writer of “Memo to the Employees of Mother Nature” chose a distinctive format—a memo—which usually requires a certain kind of diction.

11. a. How would you describe the diction usually used in memos? What kind of language do people employ when they write memos?
- b. How would you describe the tone of memos?
12. Memos are very ordinary parts of most people’s lives. Can you think of other common prose formats that you might use every day that could be used to produce interesting poetry?
13. Brainstorm a list of topics that you think might make interesting—but surprising—memos. Work with a partner if possible.

14. Choose **one** of the following options:

- Use one of the topics that you listed in question 13 to write a poem in the form of a memo or how-to manual or one of the other forms of writing that you listed when responding to question 12.
- Convert Dorothy Parker's poem (found on page 79) into a memo. How does the voice and diction change?
- Convert Mary Oliver's poem (from page 20 of Section 1) into a how-to manual. How does the voice and diction change?



15. Bearing in mind what you've just experienced, how would you say that the format you selected in responding to the preceding question affected tone and diction?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 4 on page 184.

In Lesson 4, you've worked extensively with tone, refining your ability to both identify it and create it. You've also continued to develop your skills in both reading and writing poetry, and you've gone through the process of preparing an oral interpretation of a poem and presenting it to an audience.

In the final lesson of this section, you'll expand your second-level responses to poetry by exploring the ways in which poets use imagery.

Lesson 5: Images Are It



imagery

words used to
“paint” pictures or
create sensations
for the reader or
listener

Poetry thrives on **imagery**. Strong imagery makes poetry specific, concrete, and vivid instead of vague and abstract. This is perhaps best reflected in the following quotation by poet Marianne Moore.

Poetry is imaginary gardens with real toads in them.



What a contrast! You read her quote and you start thinking about poetry as an imaginary garden—something beautiful and mystical—and then **thunk!** She goes and drops a toad in there, all warty and gross.

1. Levi thinks toads are “all warty and gross.” What do you think about toads? Visualize a real toad and concentrate on it. In poetry or in prose, write a few lines describing it in as much detail as possible.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 5 on page 185.

Imagery isn't restricted to the visual qualities of a poem. Poetry is expressed through sense-oriented language; imagery appeals to readers in all the different ways that they can take in the world—through sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing. There are other physical sensations that a poet may appeal to that don't fall within the five senses—such as temperature (*thermal*), movement (*kinesthetic*), and sensations like tiredness or hunger.

2. What senses did you appeal to in your description of the toad?

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 5 on page 185.

3. The following chart provides you with the terms that are used to describe each kind of imagery.

Imagery		
Sense	Kind of Imagery	Example
sight	visual	
hearing	auditory	
smell	olfactory	
taste	gustatory	
touch	tactile	
movement	kinesthetic	
temperature (hot/cold)	thermal	
other felt sensations		

Look at all the poems you've read so far in Module 4. Try to find **one** example for each kind of imagery from any or all of the poems. Create a chart like the preceding one and complete it by filling in your examples in the third column.

Compare your chart with the one in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 5 on page 185.

Figurative Language

Imagery frequently depends on figurative language. You're already familiar with **figures of speech** like metaphor, simile, hyperbole, and personification.



figures of speech

expressions in
which words are
used in unusual
ways to create
special effects

4. With what other figures of speech are you familiar? Brainstorm a list of as many terms as you can remember from previous modules or grades. Don't worry right now if you don't remember precisely what they mean. Work with a partner if possible.
5. Now look at the following chart and see if you can match each definition to its appropriate figure of speech. Create a similar chart, but this time put things in their proper places.

Figures of Speech	
Terms	Definitions
hyperbole	a comparison in which one thing is likened to another, signalled by the use of <i>as</i> or <i>like</i>
metaphor	the attribution of human qualities to things that are not human
apostrophe	the repeating of a word, phrase, or idea to create emphasis
understatement	the addressing of a thing, place, idea, or absent person as if present and able to understand
synecdoche	exaggeration used for emphasis or effect, either serious or humorous
symbolism	a comparison that describes one thing in the terms of another
simile	the assigning to an object the name of something else with which it is associated
repetition	the representation of something as less than it is, often for humorous effect
personification	the use of an important point to refer to the whole
metonymy	a reference to an object, person, or event that has a meaning greater than its literal meaning

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 2: Lesson 5 on page 186.



Because you've probably encountered most of these poetic techniques in previous grades, they won't be belaboured here. But you will be expected to be familiar with them. Your handbooks should help; see pages 214 to 217 of the *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*. The two terms that you may not be as familiar with as the others are *synecdoche* and *metonymy*.

synecdoche

a figure of speech whereby a part of something is given to represent the whole

metonymy

a figure of speech in which one thing is mentioned in place of another thing with which it's closely associated

Synecdoche occurs when a writer names a part of a larger entity while meaning the whole. For example, "Three sails appeared on the horizon" really means that three boats or ships appeared.

Metonymy is rather similar, only now the name of one thing is substituted for another thing that it's closely associated with. An example is "Labour supports the proposed rise in the minimum wage." What the writer really means is that in general working people support the increase.



In Lesson 5, you've taken a good taste, sniff, touch, and look at poetry. Imagery is crucial to the creation of a poem, and you've had the chance to check out how it works. You've identified different kinds of imagery and you've also very quickly reviewed the various figures of speech that are often used by poets to create imagery.

Conclusion



You've covered a lot of ground in Section 2. You've considered some important elements of poetry including the complex relationship between reader, speaker, poet, and poem. You've had the chance to read several poems and practise identifying speaker, tone, imagery, and figures of speech. You've also had the chance to hear a poet talk about her own writing, and you've experimented with your own language and ideas about poetry. In Section 3, you'll combine all of this knowledge and experience with the elements of sound that are so very crucial to the genre of poetry.

Now turn to Assignment Booklet 4A and complete the remaining question for this section.

Lesson 1: Poetry as Orature



NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF CANADA/C10513

oral tradition

the stories and history of a culture that are commonly told but not written down

orature

a body of texts that are spoken

literature

a body of texts that are written

Though most of the poems you experience as a person living in the twenty-first century are written, poetry is intrinsically connected to sound. It arose out of centuries-old **oral traditions** around the globe. Humans were speaking for many thousands of years before they developed writing systems, so knowledge was passed on only by word of mouth. For many people around the world, the primary form of cultural interaction is still spoken, not written—**orature** rather than **literature**.

In the oral tradition, poems and stories were passed on linearly through members of a family or tribe or laterally through travelling storytellers. Whatever these storytellers were (and are still) called—elders, shamans, griots, bards, troubadours, minstrels—they relied on chanting, drumming, and dancing to educate and entertain people.

The stories, in the form of songs and poetry, served diverse and astonishing purposes. People in Australia developed a highly sophisticated system of mapping the land through chants and songs; the landmarks that a person would be walking by are embedded right in the poetry. It's amazing to think that a poem could lead someone to a water hole in the desert. Poems and songs governed worship, ritual, and prayer.

GOING FURTHER

If you have access to the Internet, you can listen to “Wedding Prayer” at the following website:

http://www.radio.cbc.ca/programs/poetryplus/lyrical/anon_apache.html

This prayer is an ancient poem from the oral tradition of the Apache people who live in the Southwestern United States.

If you’re interested in the oral culture of Canada’s First Nations people and don’t have anyone to ask, one place to start is at the Canadian Museum of Civilization’s exhibit “The Art of Storytelling.” The exhibit can be found at this website:

<http://www.civilization.ca/aborig/storytel/indexeng.html>

Many poems exist today in the form of songs, prayers, and chants such as the sacred chants that make up the song cycles of the Dineh, or Navajo, people, which are known as the *Blessing Way*. Poems traced family lineages, cultural history, and knowledge of plants and animals. People chanted them while working in order to make tasks pass efficiently. Unsurprisingly, poetry often had musical accompaniment.

Writing Folder Suggestion 40

Can you think of a poem you know by heart that you’ve never seen written down? Write it out without looking it up anywhere and then describe how you came to memorize that particular poem. Where did you get it from?

Mnemonic device

A short rhyme that helps you remember something

The poem that you came up with may have been short and snappy—easy to recall even after years. Maybe it was a **mnemonic device**, a short rhyme designed to help you remember something such as a grammatical rule—for example this one:

i before e except after c

Maybe it was a childhood rhyme for a game like skipping. Maybe you learned it at day camp. Perhaps you remembered a prayer.

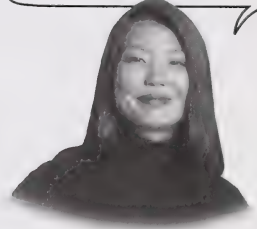
Whatever the nature of the poem you chose, it was probably short—which is partly why it was easy to remember.



Sure, but not all poetry is short. How did poets remember tales like the Indian *Ramayana* or the Greek *Iliad* and *Odyssey*? They were thousands and thousands of words long.



Believe it or not, the answer is poetry. You could say that poetry provided a template into which the storyteller could fit any number of stories and make slight adjustments as required.



As the oral tradition of different cultures evolved, poetic forms emerged that gave the storyteller a clear path to follow. Repetitive and rhythmic structures served as signposts for the poet-storytellers who had to make their way through vast amounts of material. The signposts that a poet could count on were things like consistent numbers of syllables per line, the same number of lines per stanza, regularly repeating refrains, or call-and-response patterns.

Poetic forms have changed drastically through the centuries. In the twentieth century such forms came to be seen by many as unnecessarily rigid. Many poets rejected “the rules” in favour of **free verse**. Nonetheless, a lot of poetry today still adheres to—or borrows from—traditional rules of rhythm. Rap and hip-hop are modern examples of how emotions and images can be put into a clearly defined form. The rules aren’t totally strict, but lyrics are almost always spoken to a regular beat and the rhyming is pretty consistent. Rap and hip-hop are two of the most widely used “templates” in popular music today. The impact of rap and hip-hop rhythms extends beyond the music scene; writers have incorporated them into their poetry and performances as well.

free verse

poetry that has no particular length, structure, rhythm, or rhyme pattern



Read “Rhyme on My Mind Pt. 1” by Toronto poet and performance artist Motion. Read it once silently, and then answer the question that follows the poem.

Rhyme on My Mind Pt. 1

When I was younger
I used to wonder
how I would handle
The life I was given—living like I’m on a trampoline
Feelin’ the seconds jump from days to months
To years, some of my peers now be lying in dust
Ashes to ash—used to skip class

but now I teach it
 Reaching my goals
 Tho I was told I couldn't reach it
 Music is pursuit for fools
 and maybe dreamers getting caught in the floss
 Getting lost and always scheming for that next deal
 Impossible to put the pen to the side
 —picking formats of logic—
 I never meant to be ostracized
 but to realize my vision
 Come in the night like a lady in white
 bringing the insight
 So I write because I have to
 Release the locks that got my brain all blocked
 and backed up
 I'm acting up when I'm repressing
 Tryna progress
 and clear my ears so I can finally hear the lesson.

1

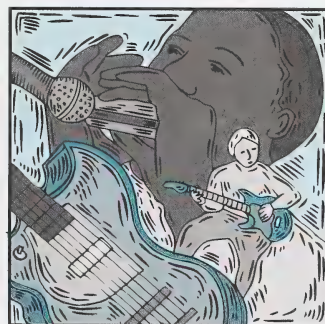
1. What was it like reading the poem silently? Did you find yourself following any rhythm in your head as you read it?

Now read the poem out loud and listen to see if any rhythms emerge. As they become apparent, adjust your reading to emphasize them.

2. How was reading the poem out loud different from reading it silently?
3. Besides rhythm, does the poem incorporate other elements that could be called *oral*? If so, identify them.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 1 on page 187.

Rap is just one identifiable “template.” Think about other kinds of music and the templates they provide. Country and western and blues are two more examples that emerged in North America. Ghazals are a popular form that emerged in Iran. Salsa and reggae and merengue beats developed in the Caribbean and parts of Latin America. These musical forms not only utilize a fairly standard set of rhythms and rhyme schemes, but they’re also each associated with particular kinds of emotions, subjects, and images.



¹ Wendy Braithwaite, “Rhyme on My Mind Pt. 1,” in *Motion in Poetry* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 2002). Reproduced by permission.

4. Find some lyrics to a song that has a clearly defined rhythmic structure. It can be any kind of music as long as it has a regular structure, or “template,” that you can identify. You only need five to ten lines of the lyrics. Use them to fill out the following chart.

Artist	
Song	
Lyrics	
Structural Elements	
Themes/Issues/ Topics	

For helpful comments, see the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 1 on page 187.

Hopefully, Lesson 1 has broadened your knowledge of the roots poetry has in ancient oral traditions. You’ve had the opportunity in this lesson to explore your own connections to oral culture and to gain an awareness of some of the structural elements that characterize it.

You’ll embark on a more detailed exploration of sound in Lesson 2.

Lesson 2: Sound Breakdown

If you take a word and pull it apart, meaning might be lost, but sounds remain. Have you ever stopped in the middle of saying a word and thought, “This is the most bizarre sound. What does it mean?” If your brain turns off momentarily, what are you left with? Probably you find yourself laughing at a syllable that might be fun to say but doesn’t mean anything.

In Europe, just after World War I, **Dadaist** poets deliberately set out to exploit these crazy sounds of language when they launched their poetic movement.

Consider these lines from a poem called “Gadji Beri Bimba” by the Dadaist poet Hugo Ball.

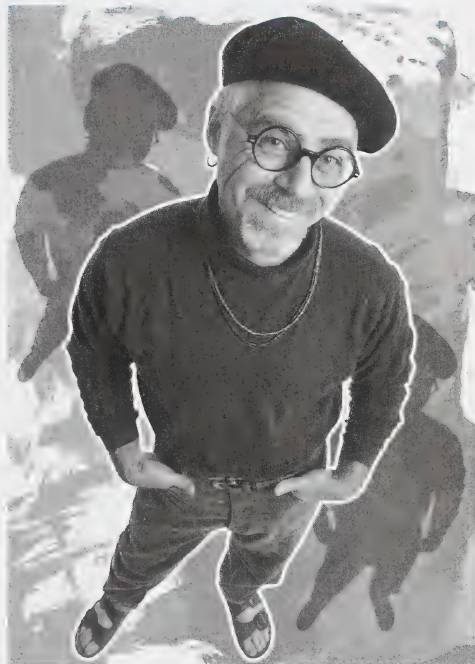
zimzim urullala zimzim urullala zimzim zanzibar zimzalla zam
elifantolim brussala bulomen brussala bulomen tromtata velo
da bang band affalo purzamai affalo purzamai lengado tor

—Hugo Ball

Read these lines out loud or have a partner read them aloud to you. Try not to stumble over the words.

Note that if you want to hear a recording of this poem and other Dadaist works, they can be downloaded from this website:

<http://www.ubu.com/sound/ball.html>



Dadaism

an artistic movement in Europe after World War I that rejected the conventional laws of beauty to create art based on irrationality



Writing Folder Suggestion 4P

In your opinion, is there anything valuable or pleasurable about that line of poetry? Try creating a first-level response to the sounds of the poem.

Dadaism never did take root, but there are still artists today who choose to leave meaning behind and use only sound to create art. They're called *sound poets*. You're probably more likely to find their work on compact disc than in a book. Composers with the famed Canadian entertainment company *Cirque du Soleil* frequently invent lyrics using made-up languages to accompany their shows.

1. Can you think of any other examples of art in which sounds or "words" are used that don't necessarily have any meaning attached to them?

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 2 on page 187.

There are many ways to manipulate sound, though most of them aren't as explicit as the Dadaist method. Poets, consciously or not, rely on the physical properties of sound to increase the impact of a poem. Whether or not you're aware of it, certain qualities are associated with particular sounds. Poets put this tendency to good use.

Do you have any words that you particularly enjoy because of their sound alone?



I've always loved the word *anemone*—as in *sea anemone*. It sounds so gentle. I also like the word *mother*; it's gentle too and has a lot of good associations.



For some reason, I've always found the words *balloon* and *bassoon* kind of funny. I don't know why; I just do!



2. Do you have any favourite word or words? If you've never thought about it, consider a word you've heard that strikes you as odd or interesting. If you're really stuck, read a dictionary until you find one. Say the word aloud. Are you struck by this word because of its sound, its meaning, or both?

For helpful comments, see the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 2 on page 188.

Playing with spoken sounds is a popular pastime in most languages. Take, for instance, tongue twisters. People must have discovered eons ago that certain sound combinations are hard to say and can produce ridiculous effects. Here are three short examples in English:

- rubber baby buggy bumpers
- She sells seashells by the seashore.
- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.



I know the one that's supposed to be the hardest tongue twister in English. Try saying this fast: The sixth sheik's sick sheep seeks the sick sheik's sixth sheep!

GOING FURTHER

- No matter what language a tongue twister is in, you can still identify and enjoy the sound play. That's because the crux isn't the meaning but the sound. If you have access to the Internet, try out some international tongue twisters at the following website:

<http://www.uebersetzung.at/twister/>

- If you enjoy playing around with the sounds of words, try this: Choose a sound or sounds and invent a short tongue twister that—in the spirit of tongue twisters—is playful and nonsensical. Here's an example of a made-up tongue twister that employs the *j* sound: *Angels enjoy jolly jelly*.

Now, choose a different set of sounds and invent another tongue twister, this time based on an issue or emotion that you consider serious. What kind of effect is created this time?

Like a Dadaist poem, the meaning in a tongue twister is second in importance to the sounds. Even though you can understand the words, what's actually said is arbitrary. The images may be entertaining because they're generally nonsensical, but the primary object of a tongue twister is to put the sounds into patterns that are amusing. They can also be used to “trick” children into learning language through play.

Lesson 2 has provided you with the opportunity to play with sound and, more importantly, to consider its various effects. In Lesson 3, you'll explore some of the more formalized and subtle sound devices that poets use to evoke emotional responses in their audiences.



Lesson 3: Sound Techniques



onomatopoeia

the use of a word that mimics an actual sound

As amusing as the rhymes of childhood or the verses of the Dadaists are, most poetry employs sound in much more subtle and sophisticated ways. As you already know, poets can rely on several different figures of speech, also called *poetic techniques* or *poetic devices*, to play with sound as well as meaning. You looked briefly at some of the most important figures of speech at the end of Section 2.

Figures of speech aren't unique to poetry; they're frequently employed in prose as well. The figures of speech that you'll be examining in Lesson 3, unlike those you thought about in Section 2, are specifically related to sound. One of the most obvious poetic techniques—one with which you may already be familiar—is **onomatopoeia**. Onomatopoeia is the tendency in language to produce words that mimic the sounds that they represent—like *crack* or *burble*.

1. a. Listen carefully to a non-verbal sound that you hear in your daily life, and invent your own onomatopoeic word to describe it. You might choose something like the opening of a door, the cry of a baby, or the bark of a dog. If you aren't able to listen to the sound at this moment, imagine it. Is it possible to wrestle that sound into an actual word? Do you think it would be easier using the sounds of another language?
- b. Use the same sound or a new sound to write a longer description of one or two lines that captures its quality.

For helpful comments, see the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 3 on page 188.

In onomatopoeia, sound actually becomes meaning. Other more subtle poetic techniques don't employ such a direct connection; rather, sound supports meaning. In fact, sometimes it can do the opposite and contrast with the meaning of the words of the poem, thereby creating an ironic tension.

alliteration

the practice of repeating a sound at the beginnings of a series of words or a consonant that isn't necessarily at the beginning

Alliteration is one of the most common ways to arrange sound in poetry. It has come to mean either the repetition of a sound at the beginnings of a number of words or the repetition of a consonant not necessarily at the beginnings of words. You likely experienced how alliteration works to support or subvert meaning if you created tongue twisters in the preceding lesson.

English poetry used alliteration even before it used rhyme. You can see this in the opening lines of the medieval play *Piers Plowman*, written in verse. A translation from middle English is provided.

In a somer seson, whan soft was the sonne,
I shope me in shrouds, as I a shepe were

—William Langland

In a summer season, when soft was the sun,
I wrapped myself in shrouds, as if I were a sheep



Ms. Kim: Despite the fact that there's no rhyme in these two lines, would you say that there's a musical quality?

Carmen: Definitely. There's something about the repetition of the *s* and *sh* that makes it musical.

Levi: I thought that the *s* sound wouldn't make it musical. I thought that would make it seem threatening or sinister. I mean, isn't that the sound that a snake makes?

Fiona: That's true. Hissing and spitting are definitely not pleasant sounds. But a sound can have more than one association can't it? Maybe it depends on context.

Tyson: Yeah, because *s* and *sh* are also the sounds of a whisper. The idea of someone talking softly makes it seem soothing and quiet.

Carmen: I agree. I'd say that in these lines, it creates a soft effect that kind of matches with the imagery. *Summer, soft, sun, sheep* aren't harsh nor cold. They seem gentle and warm.

euphony

the effect created
by sounds that are
melodious and
pleasing to the ear

Ms. Kim: The effect that's created by these opening lines is **euphony**, a word whose Greek root means "sweetness of sound." When sounds are melodious and pleasing to the ear, they are *euphonious*.

Writing Folder Suggestion 4Q

Synesthesia is a phenomenon that occurs in the brain when a person who experiences something through one sense also experiences another sense that isn't real but seems to be. For instance, a certain sound might cause someone to see a particular colour. You can play with this phenomenon now by linking colours and sounds.

Earlier you were asked to identify a favourite word. Think now of a favourite letter of yours. What sound does it make and what is the nature of that sound? If you had to associate that sound with a particular colour, what would it be and why? Go a bit further and try to describe your chosen letter in the same way that you'd describe a person. For instance, *L* might be mellow, and *P* could be hyperactive.

2. Look at the following two lines from Tennyson's poem "The Princess."
Read them aloud, or have someone else read them to you.

The moan of doves in immemorial elms
And murmurings of innumerable bees

—Alfred, Lord Tennyson

- Would you say that the sounds in these lines create euphony? Give your reasons.
- Can you identify any alliteration in these two lines?
- Did you tune into any other repeated sounds that aren't at the beginnings of words? What sound is repeated the most?
- What effect is created by these two lines of poetry in terms of sound? Can you think of **two** adjectives to describe it?



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 3 on page 188.

assonance

the repetition of vowel sounds, usually close together, not necessarily at the beginning of the word

consonance

the repetition of consonant sounds, usually close together, not necessarily at the beginning of a word

cacophony

the effect created by sounds that are dissonant or harsh

In addition to the alliteration of words like *moan* and *murmurings*, Tennyson also creates assonance in these lines. **Assonance** is the repetition of vowel sounds such as the vowel *u* in *murmurings* and *innumerable*.

The opposite of assonance is **consonance**, which, as you probably can guess, is the practice of repeating consonant sounds even though the vowels may change. You probably noticed that in these two lines, there's frequent repetition of the letters *m* and *n* though they don't always occur at the beginning of the words. This repetition is consonance.

The effect produced by poetic techniques like alliteration or consonance may not always be euphonious. If sounds are jarring or disruptive, they create **cacophony**. Rather than creating a soothing effect, poets may deliberately choose to employ sounds that clash, startle, frighten, or disrupt.



3. Find or invent a couple of lines of cacophonous language. It can be prose or poetry. Look for it in any source—the newspaper, TV, or a book of poetry. Does your sample rely on alliteration or consonance to create cacophony? What letters in particular create the cacophony?
4. Is creating cacophony different from creating euphony? Do these devices have any effect on meaning?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 3 on page 189.

Now open Assignment Booklet 4B, turn to the Section 3 Assignment, and respond to question 1.

In Lesson 3, you've become familiar with (or perhaps reviewed) a number of poetic devices that concern themselves with the arrangement of sounds. You've increased your awareness of the range of techniques that poets have come to use over the centuries and the range of effects that can be created.

You'll continue to explore sound in Lesson 4, now looking at patterns that concern themselves not just with the repetition of a single letter or sound but also with the repetition of an entire word or an entire series of words.

Lesson 4: Rhyme and Reason



The Rhythm of Prose and Poetry

A number of sounds (combined with meaning) make a word. In conventional prose, a number of words combined in a certain order make a sentence and a number of sentences make a paragraph. This pattern is regular and predictable.

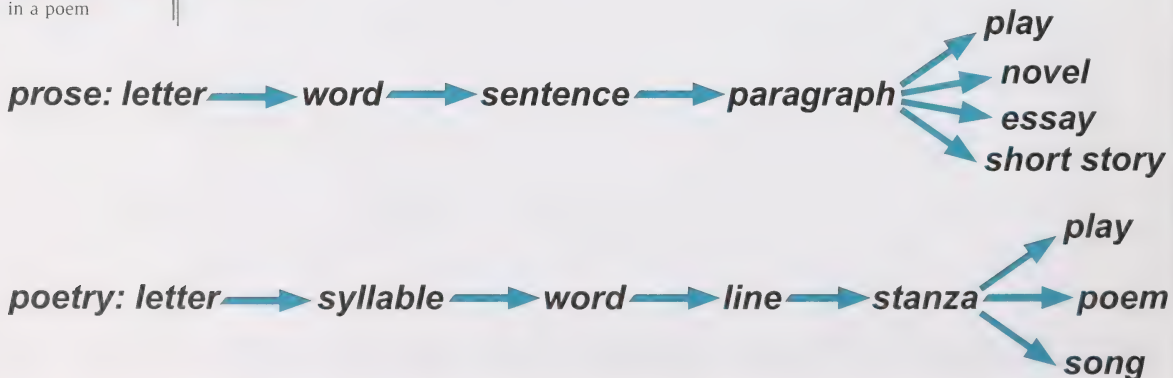
verse

one line of a poem

stanza

a grouping of lines in a poem

Historically, poetry was also just as predictable. Sounds combined to make words. Words combined to make lines, also known as **verses**. Verses combined to create **stanzas** and, finally, a group of stanzas made up a poem. The following chart will illustrate this.



rhythm

the sense of movement in prose or in poetry, created by the arrangement of sounds, words, lines, or stanzas

Throughout the ages, these parts were highly organized. There would frequently be a consistent number of syllables per line, lines per stanza, and stanzas per poem. Think back to the earlier discussion of the oral tradition; this regularity is what could be called the *template* of the poem. Such regular patterns create a strong sense of **rhythm**, which makes it easier to remember and pass along a poem or a song. Think of those annoying song lyrics or advertising slogans that stick in your head for hours after you've heard them. Often they stick because of their strong rhythmic qualities.

1. When you think of rhythm, you probably think of music or dance. Consider your life and rhythm for a moment.
 - a. If you had to describe your life in terms of movement, how would you describe it? Is it bumpy, steady, fast, smooth, slow? Is it sometimes one rhythm and at other times something else?
 - b. Are any of the rhythms that govern your life cyclical? Is there something that happens in your life every day, week, month, or year? For instance, seasons provide a kind of rhythm.
 - c. Write a poem capturing one of these rhythms or, if you prefer, write a paragraph describing how such a poem might be written. For example, how could a writer set up a poem so that it captures the rhythm of the seasons?

For helpful comments, see the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 4 on page 189.

GOING FURTHER



The close link between poetry and sound seems to ignore the fact that not every language is based on sound. Can you imagine how a poem looks in American Sign Language? How do you think an ASL poet creates rhythm without speaking? Check out deaf poet Peter Cook's stunning performance of "Poem" in ASL at the following website. He's accompanied by the voice of his collaborator Kenny Lerner, but you can always turn down the sound.

<http://www.poetspath.com/bestmind.html>

Metre in Poetry

All speech or writing has rhythm, but when it's organized into regular repeating units, it becomes **metre**. Poetry in different languages uses different "markers" to build rhythm. The two most commonly used markers, or measures, are

- the number of syllables per line
- the number of stressed syllables per line



metre

the patterns created by the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables in a poem

accentual-syllabic system

the system that has evolved in the English language to both create and analyse rhythm in poetry

haiku

unrhymed poetry of Japanese origin, in which there are three lines containing five, seven, and five syllables respectively

Traditional English poetry incorporates both of these elements into a system that's called **accentual-syllabic**. The rhythm of poetry is "measured" by looking at both the number of syllables and the number of stressed syllables in a poetic line.

You might compare the accentual-syllabic system to the purely syllabic system of Japanese poetry. You've probably written **haiku** before. The format depends entirely on the number of syllables per line—five syllables for the first one, seven syllables for the second one, and again five syllables for the final line. It doesn't matter in haiku where the stresses fall on any of these syllables. It only matters that each line has the appropriate number.

Other systems also exist; for instance, some poetry in the Middle Ages was purely accentual; the number of syllables didn't matter as long as there were four stressed syllables in each line. There are languages that don't pay any attention to syllables or accents whatsoever; they "measure" poetry by the length of time that syllables are held when spoken.

Metre is a standard, necessary feature of the accentual-syllabic system. It's also one of those technical elements that drive students nuts. That's mainly for two reasons:

- It can be very elaborate.
- It can be difficult to hear.

As well, most contemporary poetry isn't highly metrical, so you're probably not used to hearing the metre and it often doesn't seem that relevant. If contemporary culture relied on the oral transmission of information instead of written, then your ears would be more in tune to the subtle rhythms of poetry.

The elements that make up metre, though, are actually already an ordinary part of your life. In fact, they're so much a part of your language patterns that you don't even have to think about them when you're reading or speaking.



Ms. Kim: Metre is all about where stress is placed on words or on syllables. In English, we stress some syllables and sort of swallow others. But we also stress particular words in different situations.

Carmen: That's true. As a kid, I could tell when my dad was mad at me just by the way he said my name: CAR-men! He would totally emphasize the first syllable.

Tyson: In my e-mail discussion groups, the moderators tell people not to write in capital letters because YOU FEEL THAT YOU'RE BEING SHOUTED AT. It's as if every word is being stressed.

Fiona: I guess we usually just stress the words that are important or that we really want people to understand and remember.

Ms. Kim: Yes, the way English works, stress is often an indicator of importance.

Ms. Kim's point can be very helpful when you look at metre because you need to determine where stresses fall. Some people can do this instinctively, while for others it's a bit of a challenge. The discussion that follows should help you if you're in the latter group. If, by contrast, you feel confident of your ability to determine the stressed and unstressed syllables in words, just skim over the discussion until you get to unfamiliar material again. But make sure you know the meanings of any terms defined in the margins.

In an ordinary context, the "important" part of a word is usually stressed and that often—but not always—means the root. For instance, the word *helpful* can be divided into two syllables. The first syllable *help* is clearly the root; it constitutes the major part of the meaning of the word. The second syllable is the suffix *ful*. If you say *helpful*, can you hear that there's more emphasis on the first syllable? The suffix *ful* falls away. This isn't a surefire way of determining stressed and unstressed syllables; but if you have trouble hearing the stresses, it can help you.

Before you start looking for where stresses fall in complete poems, it's good to get some practice listening to where stresses fall in ordinary words. Start by tuning your ear to this word: *Canada*. Say it aloud a couple of times. Get someone else to say it for you. Start singing the anthem if you have to! No part of this word is "more important" than the others, so you can't rely on that method. Instead you have to listen carefully to the rhythm of the word. Which part seems stronger or louder? You can also put your hand under your chin. Which syllable do you open your mouth the most for?

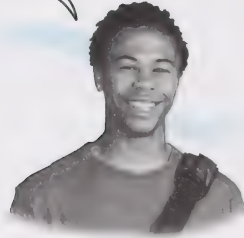
If you think back to the idea that capital letters indicate "shouting," how would you spell *Canada*? You'd probably write *CA—na—da*. In fact, the last two syllables aren't even the sound of the letter *a*; rather, they're an undistinguished vowel sound that you may have learned in earlier grades is called a *schwa*. If you wrote *Canada* exactly as it is pronounced, it'd probably be more like this: *CAH—nuh—duh*.

schwa
the undistinguished
vowel sound given
to unstressed
syllables in most
English words

Another trick to remember is that syllables with schwa sounds tend not to be stressed. Now look at another word with the same number of syllables: *banana*. Do the stresses fall in the same place in this word as in *Canada*? If you mapped the word *banana* onto the "rhythmic template" of the word *Canada*, what you'd get is *BAH—nuh—nuh*.



Oh BAH—nuh—nuh, our
home and native land.



Listen for the stresses and for the schwas in words. Does *BAH-nuh-nuh* seem to be an accurate pronunciation? Probably not. In the word *banana*, the middle syllable is stressed instead of the first syllable as in *Canada*. Put your hand underneath your chin as you say it.

Here's a more accurate portrayal of the pronunciation: buh—NAH—nuh.

scansion

the identification of stressed and unstressed syllables in a poem, also known as *prosody* or *versification*

The process of looking at words and determining where the stresses fall is called **scansion**. It's also known as *prosody* or *versification*—the study or the art of poetic metre. Scanning helps to reveal the rhythm of a poem. There are symbols used for it that are written above each syllable.

Stressed Syllable	/
Unstressed Syllable	∪

The following chart shows you how the symbols of scansion are used.

Canada	CAH—nuh—duh	/ ∪ ∪ Canada
banana	buh—NAH—nuh	∪ / ∪ banana

Here's a list of the various approaches that you can take as you determine stressed and unstressed syllables. No one method is completely accurate; really, they work best in combination.

- You or someone else can say the words or lines out loud and try to hear where the stresses are placed. Stresses usually require a slightly stronger exhalation of breath.
- Put your hand under your chin to determine which syllable is stronger by how much your mouth has to move.

- You can identify the root of the word because it's commonly stressed while prefixes and suffixes commonly are not.
 - When a vowel sound in a word is replaced by a schwa, then that syllable usually isn't stressed.
 - You can read the entire line of a poem and see how a particular word fits into the pattern.
2. a. Practise identifying stressed and unstressed syllables by scanning your name. Start with your first name. Add your middle and last names if you want to. Go through any nicknames that you have as well.
- b. Examine the following list of words. Can you determine where the stresses fall?

fantastic
rectangle

zipper
refrigerator

ringette
adult

superficial
ransack

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 4 on page 190.

Stresses—as you may already have discovered—aren't always consistent. They can vary depending on pronunciation or if the poet has manipulated them slightly to make them fit a particular rhythm. Did the word *adult* in the previous list trip you up? Say it out loud again, or have someone else say it out loud for you.



Look at the following chart to see how the word would be scanned in either case. Depending on how it is pronounced, the word *adult* is a **trochaic** or **iambic foot**.

/ ˘ adult	˘ / adult
AH—dult	uh—DULT
trochaic	iambic

trochaic metre

a rhythmic pattern built on two syllables, the first one stressed and the second one unstressed

iambic metre

a rhythmic pattern based on two syllables, the first one unstressed and the second stressed

foot

the basic unit of rhythm in poetry, usually consisting of two or three syllables that are stressed or unstressed in a consistent order

Iambic and trochaic are two of the five most common metres used in English poetry. All five are outlined in the following chart.

The Five Common Metres in English		
Metre	Rhythmic Pattern	Examples
iambic	unstressed stressed	destroy, invent, explode
trochaic	stressed unstressed	poem, writer, certain
anapestic	unstressed unstressed stressed	interfere, afternoon, disappoint
dactylic	stressed unstressed unstressed	syllable, element, Canada
spondaic	stressed stressed	good news, short break, first aid

You'll notice that in the bottom row of the chart, the examples each consist of two-word phrases. That's because in English (unlike French, for example) words with two equally stressed syllables almost never occur. Some, like *humdrum*, *windbreak*, and *backpack* come close in that neither syllable is given a schwa sound. Still, the sensitive ear will note that in each case the first syllable is stressed. Of course, when you use phrases (like *good news*) one syllable can at times be stressed to emphasize it. Compare "This is good news" with "This is GOOD news."

3. Add at least **two** more words to the list for each of the five common metres. Use two-word phrases in the spondaic box.
4. Look back at the favourite word you chose in Lesson 2: question 2 on page 96. Scan it. You probably like it for the meaning and for the sound of the letters. Do you also like it for its rhythmic qualities?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 4 on page 190.

rising metre

a metre with a basic foot that ends with a stressed syllable such as iambic or anapestic feet

falling metre

a metre with a basic foot that ends with an unstressed syllable such as trochaic or dactylic feet

Just as different sounds are associated with different qualities, so are different kinds of metre. Metres are classified as **rising** or **falling** depending on whether they end on an accented syllable or not. Just like normal speaking tones, degrees of seriousness or lightheartedness are attributed to a metre depending in part on whether it rises or falls. Anapestic and dactylic metres, with their three syllables per foot, are considered more buoyant—sometimes they're even described as *galloping* or *prancing*—so they're frequently (but not always) employed for comic verse. Again, these are all tendencies; poets use metres to achieve many different effects.



Given that metre can also help create meaning, read the following extract by poet and teacher Judith Tannenbaum. It describes her first day arriving at a prison to teach a poetry-writing class to inmates there.

The evening air was coastal-California, mid-August cool as I walked into San Quentin. Jim Carlson—the man who put together the art program at this, California’s oldest, prison—walked with me down the long path that looked out across the San Francisco Bay. Jim told me about count clearing and chow and Close B’s and officer coverage. As we walked toward the castlelike structure ahead, Jim spoke of Max Shack, Four Post, West Block, and Yard Side.

I hugged the poems I’d prepared for the night’s class, ready to share the language I loved, and silently repeated the words of this new tongue: *Max Shack, Four Post, West Block, Yard Side*. These spondees sounded with my heart’s own two-beat pulsation and became the first entries in a glossary whose meanings would deepen and fill the next four years of my life.

5. a. What does the writer mean when she refers to the words she hears as “spondees”?
- b. What characteristics is she attributing to spondaic metre? Do you agree with her interpretation of the nature of spondaic metre?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 4 on page 191.

Of all the metres, iambic is seen by many writers to most closely resemble speech, and for that reason, at least until the rise of free verse, it was the most commonly used metre. It was used extensively in drama as well as in poetry. Shakespeare’s plays were largely based on unrhymed iambic **pentameter** known as **blank verse**. The rhythm of blank verse isn’t that hard to imagine. Identify any two-syllable word whose metre is iambic, for example the words *hello* or *again*, and say it five times—hence there are five feet. Two lines of blank verse are rhythmically identical to the following two lines:

hello hello hello hello hello
again again again again again



In your study of Shakespeare in earlier grades, you may have learned that he used verse to tell the reader something about his characters—for instance, their intentions, whether honourable or evil, or their social status. Usually when variations in metre occur within the standard iambic pentameter, this calls attention to a particular moment.

¹ Judith Tannenbaum, *Disguised as a Poem: My Years Teaching Poetry at San Quentin* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000), 3. Reproduced by permission.



Following is an extract with which you will likely be familiar (and if you aren't, you will be before this course is over!). It's from Hamlet's famous soliloquy "To be or not to be." It will remind you what blank verse is like.

To Sleep? Perchance to dream! aye there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of such long life;

—William Shakespeare

6. Can you identify five feet of iambic metre in each line? Write out the lines and put accent marks above the syllables to scan the lines.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 4 on page 191.

As you've just discovered, scanning a poem requires the reader not only to identify where the stresses fall but also to count the number of feet per line. The following terms are used to describe the number of feet in a line of poetry. You may recognize some of the names from your math class.

Number of Feet	Name	Number of Feet	Name
1	monometer	5	pentameter
2	dimeter	6	hexameter
3	trimeter	7	heptameter
4	tetrameter	8	octameter

7. Practise scanning by reading the following lines of poetry. Divide the lines into feet and put in accent marks. Then identify the type of metre as well as the number of feet. The first one has been done as an example.

- u / u / u / u / u /
a. The sum/mer thun/der, like/ a wood/en bell

—Louise Bogan

Because there are five iambic feet in this line, it's iambic pentameter.

- b. And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.

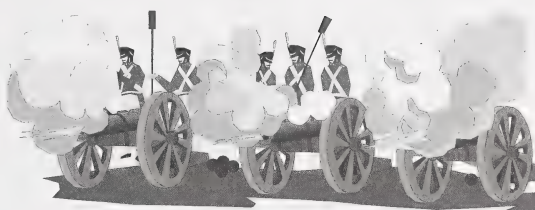
—William Blake (1789)

- c. We were very tired, we were very merry

—Edna St. Vincent Millay

- d. Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volleyed and thundered;

—Alfred, Lord Tennyson



- e. Come live with me and be my love

—Christopher Marlowe (1600)

- f. Go and catch a falling star

—John Donne (1633)

- g. Smart lad, to slip betimes away.

—A. E. Housman

- h. This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlock

—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 4 on page 192.

For more review of metre and scansion in poetry, take a look at pages 220 to 222 in the *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*.

In order to get a clear sense of the rhythmic underpinnings of an entire poem, you need to sample at least two lines. If a regular pattern can be identified, then the poem is said to be in that particular metre. For instance, if a poem is written mainly in anapestic metre and the lines tend to be six feet long, then you could confidently say that the poem's **base rhythm** is anapestic hexameter. Even if some lines vary (and they often will), the base rhythm is still the same.

Here are a few pointers to keep in mind when scanning poetry:

- A poem rarely contains only one type of metre, so keep an eye out for variations.
- Take into account any **elision** (or contraction) of syllables, often signaled by an apostrophe. A syllable has been dropped from the word in order to maintain a particular rhythm. An example that you might remember from Section 1 is *flow'r*.



base rhythm

the metre that occurs most frequently in a poem

elision

the practice in poetry of slurring or dropping a syllable in a word in order to create euphony or sustain a particular rhyme

- Watch for the opposite—words that look like one syllable but can be pronounced as two, such as *fire*, often pronounced *fi-er*.
 - Divide the words into syllables.
 - Read the poem aloud paying attention to where the stresses fall. If necessary, go back to the suggestions provided earlier.
 - Draw the symbols in over the syllables as you identify them.
 - Pay attention to the meaning of the poem. It can sometimes point toward where stresses lie.
 - Watch for emerging patterns. To find the base rhythm, you scan just a few lines. To see all the rhythmic subtleties of the poem, scan the whole thing.
 - Identify the type of metre (for example, iambic, trochaic, anapestic, dactylic).
 - Count up the number of feet per line (for example, monometer, dimeter, trimeter).
 - Identify the base rhythm of the poem. Why might the poet have chosen this rhythm? Can any obvious connections be made to the meaning of the poem?
 - Look at the rhythmic variations in the poem. Are they there for a reason? Do they contribute to the meaning of the poem in any way? How do they affect the pace of the poem? Do they create any kind of emphasis?
8. Identify the metre in the first stanza of Emily Dickinson's poem "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" written in 1863. Scan every line and be sure to count the number of feet.



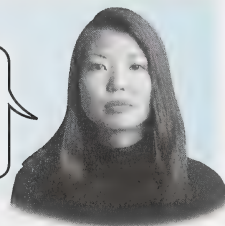
Because I could not stop for Death—
He kindly stopped for me—
The carriage held but just Ourselves—
And Immortality.

—Emily Dickinson

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 4 on page 193.

It's important not to assume that every poem is going to follow just one single pattern; otherwise, you could end up forcing a poem into a template that it doesn't fit. Metre provides the underpinnings to a poem, but poets have the freedom to play, to make adjustments, and to move away from the strict rules. Variety prevents the poem from becoming too predictable or leaden. While humans thrive on repetition, they also enjoy variety. Readers tend to become bored if the rhythms are too fixed or repetitive.

And when you read poems aloud, don't follow the metre so slavishly you get into a repetitive, sing-songy pattern. Use a poem's metre as a guide, but don't recite it like a nursery rhyme.



Rhyme

rhyme

the placement of two or more words close together in order to emphasize the similarity in their sounds

By now you've probably got a good handle on metre. Congratulations! It's perhaps the trickiest aspect of poetry to absorb. You likely feel much more comfortable with **rhyme**. Throughout your life, you've probably listened for it and practised it more. As with alliteration and some other sound elements, people play around with rhyme quite frequently. It often makes its way into people's nicknames, the names of businesses, and—of course—kids' games.

Rhyme, you would think, is self-explanatory: you look at two words and they sound the same—no big deal. But even with rhyme there are a few different things going on that aren't always immediately apparent.

9. Go back and look at Motion's poem "Rhyme on My Mind Pt. 1" on page 92 in Lesson 1 of this section. Identify the words that you think rhyme.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 4 on page 193.

The rhyme that people tend to recognize—the *cat/hat* variety—is known as *perfect rhyme*, and readers usually expect to see it at the end of a line. *End rhyme* is perhaps the most common variety of rhyme, but it's not the only one and neither is perfect rhyme. There are many different kinds of rhyme.



rhyme scheme

a pattern of end
rhyme in a poem

When poems have a regular pattern of end rhyme, a **rhyme scheme** can be worked out. For instance, if you grew up a member of what might be called mainstream Canadian culture, you may recognize the following lines. Note the letters appearing to the right.



Mary had a little lamb. a
Her fleece was white as snow. b
And everywhere that Mary went, c
The lamb was sure to go. b

The letters on the right indicate that the rhyme scheme of the first stanza of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” is **abcb**; the second and fourth lines alone rhyme. Sometimes upper-case letters are used to introduce each new, as yet unrhymed, end sound: **ABCB**.

For another example of a nursery-rhyme rhyme scheme, see page 223 of the *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*.

In responding to question 9, you probably noticed that in Motion’s poem many words that seem to “rhyme” are paired together not because they match exactly but because they echo each other in some other way. Sometimes the vowels match and the consonants don’t. Other times, the vowels don’t match and the consonants do. Words may look as if they rhyme although they don’t sound the same. The following chart will give you some ideas about the kinds of rhymes that poets employ.

Varieties of Rhyme		
Type of Rhyme	Definition	Examples
perfect rhyme	also known as <i>true rhyme</i> ; rhyme in which the vowels and final consonants of the rhyming syllables sound exactly the same	land/sand; mute/fruit
imperfect rhyme	also known as <i>slant</i> , <i>off</i> , or <i>half rhyme</i> ; rhyme in which the vowel sounds are different but the final consonants, if any, are the same (though perhaps not identical)	room/storm; be/fly

sight rhyme	also known as <i>eye rhyme</i> ; rhyme in which the words look identical but sound different	laughter/daughter; creak/ break
internal rhyme	rhyming words within one line	Each narrow cell in which we dwell —Oscar Wilde
end rhyme	rhyming words at the ends of two or more lines	He was my North, my South, my East and West, My working week and my Sunday rest, —W. H. Auden
masculine rhyme	a type of end rhyme in which the final rhyming syllables are stressed	behold/scold: touch/much
feminine rhyme	also known as <i>double rhyme</i> ; a type of end rhyme in which the final rhyming syllable in each line is unstressed and the stressed syllable that comes before it also rhymes	rhyming/chiming, mountain/ fountain
triple rhyme	a kind of feminine rhyme that involves the rhyming of the three final syllables in two or more lines, usually for comic effect	machinery/scenery, December/remember

10. How would you classify the rhymes that you identified in “Rhyme on My Mind Pt. 1”? Read the poem again to see if there are any rhymes that you missed.
11. Do you see any patterns or tendencies in the kinds of rhymes that you find in Motion’s poem? Why do you think she chose those particular kinds of rhymes?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 4 on page 193.



Additional Rhythmic Elements



Other elements contribute to the rhythm of a poem that aren't entirely part of rhyme or metre. It's worth considering them so that you have a complete picture of how the rhyme, pace, and rhythm of a poem may be influenced.

caesura

a strong pause in a poetic line, sometimes signalled by punctuation but having no impact on the metre

end-stopped

a situation that occurs when the end of a line of poetry corresponds with a caesura, sometimes signalled by punctuation

enjambment

a situation that occurs when there is no pause at the end of a line of poetry and one line flows freely into the next line without pause

Poets can include moments when the reader is meant to pause. These moments are often, but not always, signalled by some kind of punctuation—a dash, a comma, or a period, for example. When reading poetry, it's important not to ignore these pauses, also known as **caesuras**. Though they don't necessarily change the metre, caesuras contribute to the rhythmic qualities of a poem as well as to the meaning. They usually correspond with the end of a metrical foot.

Earlier in this lesson, you read an extract from a poem by Emily Dickinson, a poet renowned for her liberal use of dashes. The dashes in the stanza of poetry that you read occurred at the end of each line. When a caesura occurs at the end of a line in a poem, that line is **end-stopped**. As you read it, you pause before you go on to the next line.

If there is no caesura—no punctuation—at the end of a line of poetry, then that line is **enjambéd**. The poem moves automatically to the next line, creating a kind of continuity that's interrupted only slightly by the break in the lines.

12. Go back over the poems that you've read in Module 4.

- a. Find an example of a caesura.
- b. Find **at least two** examples of end-stopped lines.
- c. Find **at least two** examples of enjambed lines.

13. Can you identify any reasons why a poet might choose to use an end-stopped line as opposed to enjambed lines? What effects might a poet hope to achieve by using one or the other or both?

14. Go back to the lines that you scanned in question 7 and read them over again. You've already examined the metre in these lines. Do they incorporate any other interesting elements of rhythm or sound? What poetic techniques do they utilize?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 4 on page 194.

“The Tyger” by William Blake

Take a look now at the British poet William Blake’s poem “The Tyger.” The opening lines of the poem may be familiar to you. Its strong rhythmic qualities have long made it a favourite for children. Don’t forget to utilize prereading and reading strategies.



The Tyger

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright.
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

15. What is your first-level response to this poem? Freewrite for at least a minute.
16. Who is the speaker in this poem? What does the speaker want to know?
17. How would you describe the tone of the poem?
18. Who is the audience in this poem?
19. Comment on the imagery in the poem.

20. a. Scan the entire poem.
b. What is the base rhythm?
c. Are there any variations of note?
21. What is the rhyme scheme? Are there any variations of note?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 4 on page 196.

Now open Assignment Booklet 4B, turn to the Section 3 Assignment, and respond to question 2.



William Blake, who wrote “The Tyger,” was born in London in 1757 of parents who were religious dissenters. The London that he grew up in was a place of poverty and crowds. Keep in mind that the Industrial Revolution was underway and with it came rapid growth of population in urban areas. Much of the city consisted of narrow streets and smelly, dark lanes. Sanitation was nil, and poverty was rampant. It was a time of violent demonstrations by a number of different groups of trades people. Executions and punishments were commonplace and carried out in public. Blake grew up seeing injustice all around him and was deeply affected by it.

Blake was also a visionary. The word *visionary* is most often applied to someone, usually a leader, who’s forward thinking, who has a plan. But Blake was a visionary in the most literal sense of the word: he saw visions—most of them religious and sometimes frightening. Later in life, he said that he could look at a knot in a piece of wood and begin to feel frightened.

Blake attended drawing school and later apprenticed to an engraver. He published *Songs of Innocence and Experience* in 1794, subtitled “Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul.” It was to become his best-known work.

The first group of poems in this work praises the ever-present influence of divine love and compassion even in the midst of human suffering and misery. The second group of poems, more bleak and cynical in tone, explores the power of evil in human existence—and questions, to some degree, the innocent viewpoint of his first group of poems. Blake believed, however, that both states are necessary for the human soul to develop and grow. One cannot stay fixed in a state of naïve innocence, nor can one be ruled by an attitude of cynicism or bitterness. Rather, one must rise to a higher, more refined condition that includes both the innocent and experienced states of the soul.

22. Does having even a small amount of context about William Blake's life change or alter your impression of the poem "The Tyger"? Explain your response.
23. Consider the following aspects of Blake's life, and assess whether or not you see any evidence of them coming through in the poem "The Tyger."
- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. his sense of justice | c. his vivid visions |
| b. his strong religious belief | d. the Industrial Revolution |
24. "The Tyger" was published in *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. To which group of poems do you think it belongs? Why?
25. Each poem in the first group (*Songs of Innocence*) had a parallel—or contrary—poem in the second group (*Songs of Experience*). Can you imagine what the poem "opposite" of "The Tyger" was like? What animal would you guess it featured? What tone do you think it had? Describe how you imagine that poem to be.
26. Blake published his poems with extensive illustrations that he also engraved. Imagine what Blake's illustration for "The Tyger" might have looked like. Describe it or, if you prefer, make or describe your own illustration for the poem.



The Ancient of Days by William Blake

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 4 on page 198.

GOING FURTHER

The Tate museum in London has a detailed, interactive exhibition about Blake and his works on the Internet. If you would like to know more about William Blake, consider exploring this exhibition. It can be found at the following website:

<http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/blakeinteractive/>

If you'd like to hear an audio reading of "The Tyger" and to see the accompanying illustration, you can find it at the Tate Museum website at the following address:

http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/blakeinteractive/works/songs_06.html

Now open Assignment Booklet 4B, turn to the Section 3 Assignment, and respond to question 3.

In Lesson 4, you've become well versed in the principles of rhythm and metre that govern traditional poetry in English. These tools will come in useful to you in any future study of literature, music, or folklore that you may undertake. While your knowledge of poetry should have deepened, so too should have your appreciation for the everyday rhythms that exist in your life.

GOING FURTHER

The last few lessons have focused on sound elements in poetry—rhythm, rhyme, and other musical devices. For one last look at the musical aspects of poetry (along with a few other figures of speech), go to the *English Language Arts 30-1 Multimedia Segments* CD-ROM and watch the segment titled "Effects of Figures of Speech and Musical Devices." Bear in mind that you may have seen this clip while taking ELA 20-1.



Lesson 5: Poetic Forms



Now that you have an idea of how rhythm and metre and rhyme work in poetry, you'll be able to look at and evaluate some of the poetic forms that have emerged over the centuries. Of course, you've already been introduced to some in passing—for instance, blank verse, which consists of unrhymed lines in iambic pentameter. In Lesson 5, you'll have the chance to become acquainted with other poetic forms.

Form in general is a funny thing. It exploits both rhyme and metre, but it goes further than that. It may demand a certain number of lines or a certain number of stanzas. It may require that words, phrases, or lines be repeated at particular intervals. It may even require a certain subject matter. Some writers look upon these demands as a straitjacket upon their creative impulses. Other writers feel that employing such tight forms is a way to heighten the impact and intensity of their ideas.

Poetic forms supply a template, just as rhythm and metre do, but it's an even more highly defined one. This is the same way that a type of music provides a template for a song. A polka will always have a particular beat and even a particular subject matter. Musical templates often spill over into poetic form; for instance, cowboy poetry is certainly influenced by country-and-western music. You need only look again at Motion's poem to witness rap's influence or a poem by Langston Hughes to see the influence of the blues.

GOING FURTHER

dub poetry

a contemporary poetic form with roots in reggae music



Dub poetry is a contemporary poetic form, mainly performance-oriented, which has its roots in reggae music. It was pioneered by Lynton Kwesi Johnson in Britain in the '60s and '70s. Toronto poet Lillian Allen is a prominent, internationally known dub poet. If you have access to the Internet, you can hear her perform her poem "Women of Many Hands" at this website:

<http://www.griots.net/archives/Allen/pages/ladiscs.html>

Closed-Form Poetry



Fiona: Okay, I understand why rhyme and metre are important to poetry, but I have to wonder what such strict rules of form could possibly give to poetry. How could you even enjoy writing or reading a poem if you had to pay attention to silly things like the number of words in a line or the number of lines in a stanza? Is it just about giving the reader signposts?

Ms. Kim: Well, today we can't really say that poetic forms are only about giving the reader signposts, because obviously poems today aren't most valued for their oral qualities. What do the rest of you think might be some of the benefits of adopting poetic forms?

Levi: I guess it means that a poem becomes part of a larger tradition. You can see that it belongs with other poems of that type—that they share a common history.

Ms. Kim: That's a very good point. It's like learning the rules and history of music before you learn to improvise. Many poets believe that you have to know the rules before you can break them.

Levi: It's like cooking in a way. If you just throw everything into the pot without any method, you'll probably end up with some inedible mush—which I hate to say is what a lot of poetry seems like to me.

Tyson: That's a great analogy! You could almost see the forms as ancient recipes. It makes it easier for writers. They don't have to start from scratch. There's a certain predictability if you use a recipe; plus, anyone can use it, and what comes out isn't a total surprise.

Carmen: The use of poetic forms also seems to “equalize” things. For instance, if we were organizing a poetry contest, we could ask people to write in a particular form. Then the poems would be more uniform—almost as if they’d be on common ground. You could see what writers are doing with their own individual ideas. And it would be easier to judge!

Fiona: But the opposite could also be true, couldn’t it? A poet could have really bad ideas and shove them into a poetic form in order to prop them up and make them seem better than they actually are.

Ms. Kim: There’s no doubt that forms do have a certain kind of power. Different characteristics are often associated with different forms. For instance, ballads were long seen as mournful, sonnets as intellectual, and limericks as comical. Once you take a particular subject and put it into a particular form, you can’t say that the form doesn’t affect the meaning of the poem. However, I don’t think that a form is powerful enough to turn something bad into something good. If the ideas are poor and uninteresting, I’m not sure that the form of the poem will completely mask their quality. On the other hand, if the ideas are good, the form *can* illuminate or enrich them. Two contemporary writers describe poetic forms as “not locks, but keys.”

Tyson: You, know, you could also see using poetic forms simply as an interesting challenge—almost a game.

The conventional forms of English-language poetry are often referred to as **closed-form poetry**. Some forms demand a particular number of lines and a particular metre or a particular rhyme scheme and repetition of lines—as in the **villanelle**. Other forms are more concerned with the focus of the poem; for instance, an **ode** can take a number of different physical forms but must always address an inanimate object or an absent person as though alive or present. You may also be familiar with the **elegy**—a conventional form that takes as its subject the praise of a person who has died.

English has a long and rich history of poetic forms. Many of them, however, aren’t English at all but have been borrowed from other languages—such as Italian, French, Latin, Persian, Arabic, or Greek—and adapted into the English language.

Poetic imports have often been viewed as true innovations. The sonnet was introduced to England by Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey in the sixteenth century, and it went on to become one of the most used forms in the English language. Numerous forms have come into vogue and gone out again. Today, many writers in the English language are once again experimenting with the possibilities that closed-form poetry has to offer.

closed-form poetry

the opposite of open-form or free-verse poetry; poetry that relies on an established pattern of rhythm and/or rhyme

villanelle

a complicated poetic form introduced to England from France

ode

a lyric poem, usually in the form of an apostrophe

elegy

a lyric poem that mourns the death of a person, often someone the poet admired or loved

limerick

a light, usually humorous, poetic form consisting of five anapestic lines (lines 1, 2, and 5 having three feet, and lines 3 and 4 having two feet) and with a rhyme scheme of *aabba*



There's no doubt that the structure of a poem has an impact on its expressive potential. You can imagine that it would be hard to write an impassioned or serious poem in the form of a **limerick** without undermining its power. Likewise, a lightweight topic could be elevated. There have even been contests held in which people had to write haiku about subjects such as hockey. Haiku is often seen as humble and ambiguous, reverential yet cool. It often incorporates references to nature and the seasons. If the rough-and-tumble topic of hockey is plugged in there, you can imagine the tension that's created between the form and the content. One undermines rather than complements the other. This tension, of course, might be exactly what a writer sets out to achieve.



For an example of a haiku and a limerick, take a look at page 206 of the *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*.

Writing Folder Suggestion 4R



You're probably familiar with both haiku and limericks. Use this opportunity to experiment with either of these two short poetic forms. Write about a topic that's appropriate to your chosen form, or write about a topic that's inappropriate to the form. For example, you might choose a serious subject that's dear to your heart and write a limerick about it; or, if you prefer, choose a light subject that you think is entertaining and funny and write a haiku.

Stanzas

Form determines how the lines are organized in a poem. In closed-form poetry, the placement of lines, just like the metre and the rhyme scheme, is usually predictable. Each regular grouping of lines is called a *stanza* (though some poems aren't broken into stanzas at all). A stanza will not only create rhythm but will often convey a certain unity of thought. Stanzas are sometimes mistakenly referred to as *verses*. In poetry, the term *verse* refers to just one line. A stanza, line, or phrase that's repeated throughout a poem is known as a **refrain**.

refrain

a set of lines, words, or phrases that is repeated exactly or almost exactly at regular intervals throughout a poem

1. Identify a song or poem you know that has a refrain.

2. Following are the names of various types of stanzas. The names are based on the numbers of lines in the stanzas. How many lines do you think each type has?

Type of Stanza	Number of Lines
cinquain	
tercet	
sestet	
quatrain	
couplet	

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 5 on page 199.

The Sonnet

sonnet
a 14-line poem
with a fixed rhyme
scheme

The **sonnet** is one of the most widely known and used poetic forms in the English language. It has a long and rich history. It originated in the medieval courts of Italy where it was often used to flatter the powerful.

The sonnet, as mentioned earlier in this lesson, was introduced to England in the sixteenth century through the translations of Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey. The Italian sonnet was taken up and adapted by many writers including Shakespeare, eventually creating what has come to be known as the *English* (or *Shakespearean*) sonnet.



The traditional English sonnet is written in iambic pentameter and has the rhyme scheme **abab cdcd efef gg**. The first 12 lines are considered three quatrains and the last two comprise a rhyming couplet. Traditionally, sonnets have tended to focus on love, but today sonnets are being used for a much wider range of topics. There are varieties of sonnet other than the English, and today many poets experiment with the traditional sonnet form to develop new varieties.

Following is an example of the English sonnet, also known as the *Shakespearean sonnet*, written by Edna St. Vincent Millay and published in 1917. Read it over and then listen to the oral interpretation on the *English Language Arts 30-1 Audio CD*. There, the poem is identified by its first line, "Loving You Less Than Life, a Little Less."



Loving you less than life, a little less
Than bitter-sweet upon a broken wall
Or bush-wood smoke in autumn, I confess
I cannot swear I love you not at all.
For there is that about you in this light—
A yellow darkness, sinister of rain—
Which sturdily recalls my stubborn sight
To dwell on you, and dwell on you again.
And I am made aware of many a week
I shall consume, remembering in what way
Your brown hair grows about your brow and cheek,
And what divine absurdities you say:
Till all the world, and I, and surely you,
Will know I love you, whether or not I do.

3. Write a free-flow response to reading and hearing this poem.
4. Can you determine some of the rules that govern the English sonnet by examining St. Vincent Millay's poem? According to this sample sonnet, explain the rules of form and structure of sonnets of this sort.



Edna St. Vincent Millay

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 5 on page 200.

GOING FURTHER

Many sites on the Internet archive older sonnets as well as contemporary and original sonnets. A large sampling of nineteenth-century Canadian sonnets can be found at the following website:

<http://www.sonnets.org/canada.htm>

Now open Assignment Booklet 4B, turn to the Section 3 Assignment, and respond to question 4.

ballad

a narrative poem
originally meant to
be sung

The sonnet, like the elegy or the **ballad**, is just one form among many. Through the ages, poets writing in English have experimented with many other closed forms of poetry. But because their structure is so tight and the rules that govern them so explicit, sonnets are often regarded as one of the most challenging forms to write.

Free-Verse Poetry

While closed-form poems have been the norm throughout the history of the genre of poetry, most poems written in English today are written in what's known as *free verse*—a term you're already familiar with. Free verse, also known as *open-form poetry* or by its French name *vers libre*, is poetry that's unrhymed and has no regular metrical pattern nor line length. Since the nineteenth century, more and more poets have felt rhyme and a fixed metre to be inadequate for the expression of anger, grief, or doubt. These elements are seen by many poets as too seamless, bold, melodic, or confident. In recent times, many poets have thought that employing conventions of metre and rhyme undermined the meanings of their poems.

As a result, over the past century and a half, writers have experimented with poetic structures that broke “free” of the conventional rhythmic patterns. Free verse was pioneered by the American poet Walt Whitman, whose collection of poetry *Leaves of Grass* garnered much criticism when it was published in 1855—as much for its innovation in verse form as for its content. The long, rhythmic lines were thought by Whitman to be more natural a structure than closed forms of poetry.



Walt Whitman

The term *free verse* is in some ways misleading. It implies a sense of formlessness, as if a poet randomly placed words on a page without any thought as to their effect. T. S. Eliot once said, “No *vers libre* for the man who wants to do a good job.” While strict rhythms don't govern the free-verse poem, other qualities do. Their effect may be subtler than that of traditional versification, so it's important to be alert to them. All poetry, like all speech, has some kind of rhythm or organization, though it isn't necessarily regular.

5. Most of the poems that you've read in Module 4 are written in free verse. Choose **one** free-verse poem. Do you sense a rhythmic structure even if regular patterns of rhyme and metre are absent? Are there any noticeable organizing principles? Consider repetition, refrains, and groupings of lines.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 5 on page 200.

Concrete Poetry

concrete poetry

poetry created by making designs or shapes out of letters or words

The idea of making poetic designs with words is a practice that has captured the imaginations of many serious poets. You're probably familiar with this type of poetry, and perhaps you've experimented with it yourself in earlier grades—shaping words into two-dimensional forms such as a cat or a swan. **Concrete poetry**—also known as *visual poetry*—is seen to lie somewhere between literature and visual arts. Poets use words to create concrete, identifiable shapes as well as to create abstract designs or to capture movement like the lapping of waves. Poems may be built upon the repetition of a single word, and words may be layered—actually printed on top of each other—or made blurry. When concrete poetry emerged in the 1950s, the idea was for writers to use words as painters use brushstrokes. Again, sometimes meaning is sacrificed for the sake of the visual impact.

To see one example of a concrete poem, see page 208 of the *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students*.

GOING FURTHER

If you're interested in learning more about concrete poetry, there are many sites on the Internet that feature it. You can experiment with concrete poetry in many different ways.

Following are a few of them:

- Imagine a concrete object—something with a defined shape. Draw the outline of the object on your page. Now fill it in with words. There are many ways you can go about this. You might repeat the name of the object. You might choose to fill it with adjectives that describe the object. You might fill the object with standard lines of words moving across the page from left to right, or you might decide to place words upside down and sideways. Perhaps you'll choose to break up words into letters.
- Instead of a concrete shape, now choose some kind of motion such as *jump* or *veer* or *beat*. How can you use words to represent this motion visually?



- Finally, here's your chance to make a mess with words. This option will probably work really well if you're an art student or simply someone interested in the visual arts. Get out your paints, and paint words onto the page. What colour should the words you choose be? How big or small is each word? Making a collage might also appeal to you. Cut bits of words or phrases out of magazines and arrange them into poems, or write words onto pieces of paper (paint chips from a hardware store work really well for this) and glue them onto the page. If you enjoy sculpture, try sculpting a word. There are many ways to combine the colour and texture of visual art with the meaning and power of words.

Form in Poetry—A Final Look

6. In this lesson, you've thought about poetic forms. You've also thought about free verse—poetry that avoids a closed form. The poet Rita Dove refers to poetic form as “a talisman against disintegration.” What do you think she means? Do you agree?
7. Poets in the late twentieth century who have taken up closed-form poetry have come to be known as “the new formalists.” In a sense, they're participating in the revitalization of forms that have been neglected for almost a century—since the rise of free verse. What do you think attracts contemporary poets toward these forms? Do you see these forms as an appropriate mode of expression in today's world?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 3: Lesson 5 on page 200.

Poetic form is ultimately connected to sound and rhythm. It's almost a kind of punctuation that lays out the pace and rhythm of the poem. It may determine what lines or words or images are emphasized. It may determine where or when a performer or reader pauses and breathes. Form may even channel the voice of a poem. While much of the work that you've done in this lesson on form is on paper and relies on sight, keep in mind that form is integrally connected to what you hear.



GOING FURTHER

In this section you've come to understand the importance of hearing poetry performed out loud as opposed to only reading it on the page. This provides the perfect opportunity for you and your classmates, friends, or family to set up an actual reading or performance. There are many ways in which such an event can work. Whatever you do, if you plan to set up a public event, you need to adopt some concrete organizational strategies. Ask yourself some of these questions:

- Who will attend the event?
- Where and when will the event be held?
- How will it be advertised?
- What are the possible costs involved?
- Who will volunteer to help set up and clean up after the event?

Following are some possibilities. The first thing that all of them have in common is that if you plan to hold a public event, you need to think of an advertising strategy.

A reading with a published poet. This is easier than it sounds. First, you have to track down a poet. You might know someone in your community who's been published. If not, one of the best resources is the Writers Guild of Alberta; this organization provides information about writers who live in the province. You may find someone from your area, or you may contact someone who lives further away but is willing to travel to your community. Here's the website of the Writers Guild of Alberta:

<http://www.writersguild.ab.ca/>

A reading with an unpublished poet or poets. You'll probably be able to find someone close to home to read at a gathering of this sort. Ask around about people who write poetry. It might be easier to ask one or two unpublished poets to share their work. If a writing class takes place locally, perhaps the members of the class would be willing to read. You could even turn such an event into an informal gathering to which people could bring their favourite poems as well as their original work.

An open-mike night. An open-mike night simply means that a café or a place where people socialize has a microphone that anyone can step up to for a given period of time. Say, for instance, every Friday night is an open-mike night at your favourite coffee place. This event is more fluid in that you don't always know who will show up. Performers could read their own poetry, or they could choose to read someone else's.



A poetry slam. A slam is perhaps the most fun but most complicated of all the possibilities. Slams are essentially competitions and require a few things:

- enough performers with enough poems to go through several rounds of reading
- enough people in the audience to serve as judges
- a clear set of rules

Slams don't all follow the same rules, but the gist of a slam is that members of the audience are randomly asked to be judges. They're given large score cards numbered 1 to 10, which they hold up after each person has read his or her poem to rate how much they enjoyed the performance. Poets must read a different poem each round. The poet with the lowest score after each round drops out until there are only two poets left. The final two poets might be asked to do something different, like write a poem on the spot for the final round. If you're interested in finding out more about poetry slams or in discovering if there are any slams that take place in your community, search the Internet.



In Lesson 5, you've examined the function of form in poetry. You should now have a strong idea about open-form poetry, and you've had the chance to consider some closed-form poetry as well. You've considered the impact that form has on ideas and on sound, and you've explored and experimented with the relationship between them. The sonnet was one classic poetic form that you had the opportunity to examine in this lesson. Most importantly, as you worked through Lesson 5 your awareness of the elements of sound and the nature of closed-form poetry should have increased.

Conclusion



As you've worked your way through Section 3, you should have absorbed a tremendous amount of information about the relationship between poetry and sound. Your poetry vocabulary should now have expanded and your vision of poetry been enriched. You should have increased your awareness about the technical elements of metre, rhythm, and rhyme as well as the concept of form. This knowledge will benefit you in all of your later studies of literature—and even music!

Now turn to Assignment Booklet 4B and complete the remaining questions for this section.

Section 4: Critical Response to Poetry

Sean's ELA 30-1 class was a little more raucous than usual and not just because it was a Friday afternoon. The class had 45 minutes to build its own poetic canon; that is, the students had to come up with a collection of the five best, most important poems out of all the ones they'd read during their poetry module. The students separated into five groups. Each group would suggest two poems to the class and present reasons as to why they should be included. In Sean's group, Afua got the conversation going by saying, "Look at it this way—if you found yourself on a desert island, which five poems would you want to have with you?" Despite the fact that Sherry said she wouldn't want any poems with her on a desert island, the group agreed easily on the first poem. Moments later Sean and Afua found themselves embroiled in a heated discussion over the second poem. They battled each other point by point while the other students offered quotes and evidence for both sides. In the middle of the argument, Sean had a little brain wave: "Wow, this is what it means to argue about poetry; I'm actually arguing a thesis! Why can't I do this in my writing?"

In Section 4, you'll be arguing about poetry. You won't have to decide which poems to put in your own canon, but you will be asked to think about how poems create the effects that they do. You'll go through the process of choosing a topic and coming up with a thesis. All of these skills are part of your third level of response. In this section, you'll build on the skills you've developed working with the first two levels of response. You'll practise doing a close reading of a poem and have the chance to write a critical response. Not only will you develop your critical-writing skills, you'll also be able to further your own creative writing.



Lesson 1: The Third Level of Response



You've been responding to and writing about poetry on several different levels while working through the past three sections. You've been broadening your knowledge of poetry and your ability to respond to it in many different ways. The third level of response is the moment when you pull together all of your observations of a poem or poems and organize them into a formal, written response. This process can be very satisfying; it can also present a lot of challenges. Third-level response is the most analytical and thorough level of response, and it involves a **close reading** of the poem. Ultimately, it leads to the critical essay. If the question that you've had to ask yourself for the second level of response is *why*, then the question for the third level of response is *so what?* The following chart will help you follow the process.

close reading

a step-by-step analysis and explication of a text

First-Level Response	Second-Level Response	Third-Level Response
• What is my gut reaction to this poem? • How does this poem make me feel?	• Why does this poem make me feel this way? • What reasons are there in the poem for feeling this way?	• Identify x and y aspects in the poem. What effect do they create? • The poet does x and y in the poem. So what?



I often get stuck right at this point. I'll have tons of notes about a poem, but when I go to write an essay, I have no idea where to start. It just doesn't seem like fun anymore.

Yeah, writing essays is so painful. I can write short stories, poems, even personal essays any day, but when I have to write a critical essay I don't feel as if I get to be myself. You can't just write what you think.



I feel the same way. Whenever I read critical essays, I feel as if the writer is trying to use fancy language that the reader can't even understand. There doesn't seem to be any point; I'd wear out my thesaurus trying to write like that.

The thing that bugs me is the opposite. When I read other people's critical essays, they sound great. I can understand what the writer is saying. All the paragraphs make sense. When I write critical essays myself, they feel so stilted, almost like a formula. I think to myself, who would want to read this?



It sounds as if the students in Ms. Kim's class have all come up against some real stumbling blocks at the third level of response. Critical essays (or critical responses)—and formal writing in general—can be very daunting. In Module 3, you spent a lot of time writing different sorts of essays and you did a good deal of planning for a critical essay, but you haven't yet written a complete critical essay of your own.

A critical essay, you'll recall, is one that offers an analysis of one or more aspects of a text and an assessment of the text's impact. In writing essays of this sort, you're learning a specific kind of language and a specific set of conventions, and that can present a challenge. The good news, however, is that it does get easier the more you do it.

Since the focus of this module is poetry, the critical writing you'll be doing here will naturally be in response to poems. Writing critically about poetry means moving with your own unique and personal reaction to a poem into a common format and language that everyone understands. Over the years—even centuries—most academic **disciplines** have established what their preferred format and language is; but, as you can imagine, skilled writers often push limits and break rules. Formal writing always involves a struggle between the individual response and the conventions of the formal critical essay. In this process, the key thing is to find a balance. Following are some preliminary points to consider that may help you find that balance.

discipline

a branch of learning or instruction, such as English language arts or mathematics

Here are a few pointers that should help you with your third-level responses:

- **Don't let all of the work you've done up until now drain away.** Once you get to the third level of response, there's a tendency to dismiss all of those intuitive reactions and messy notes from your first- and second-level responses. You don't have to start anew; you're continuing to build on those first responses. Often a topic or a thesis for a critical essay comes directly out of your first reactions to a poem (or whatever sort of text you're dealing with).
- **Use the essay as a reason to focus and refine your thinking.** Students often feel that essays merely close them down, both creatively and intellectually. In fact, the process of writing critically should push you further. Writing a critical essay in response to a text requires you to think carefully and clearly, to formulate arguments, and to pay attention to detail. In the process, you become more articulate. To use a familiar analogy, it's not unlike using a recipe to cook something that you've never made before. The process is methodical, but the end result is something you would have had a harder time coming up with on your own.
- **Don't sacrifice your own voice.** When you write a critical essay, you might feel that you have to go into all kinds of contortions in order to "sound" a certain way. Creative writers have to establish an individual voice (as you'll recall from earlier modules), and so do critical writers. Critical, or third-level, writing does require a more formal level of language (or *register*), but it's still most effective when you write clearly and comfortably in your own voice. Otherwise, your writing may become convoluted or formulaic. Converting your ideas into words on the page can be a challenge. If you're not sure what you're trying to say or you're getting lost in your own sentences, tell your idea to someone else and then write your point down in the words that you spoke. Don't get buried in big words on paper.



1. Take a moment to consider what you find most daunting or difficult about writing formal responses to literature. Where do you usually get stumped? Also consider what you find easiest or most satisfying about writing formal critical essays. What parts of essay writing are you good at?
2. If you did have to develop your own personal **canon**, what poems would be in it? Identify **three** poems, and in just one or two sentences explain why you'd select them.

canon

a group of works, often seen as accepted works or best works

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 4: Lesson 1 on page 200.

Lesson 2: The Close Reading



What Is a Close Reading?

explication

an unfolding of a text (such as a poem) that proceeds line by line

A close reading is not unlike an **explication**—which is literally an unfolding of a text such as a poem. You unfold the poem as you write about it, moving through the poem from beginning to end, sometimes line by line or even word by word. This methodical approach enables you to pick up on subtle details that you may have missed at earlier readings. As you read a poem closely, you're trying to understand and explain how all of the different elements of the poem work together to create an effect.

As you carry out a close reading of a poem, you look for patterns and decide what those patterns do to shape the text. As a close reader of a poem, you have to ask yourself two important questions:

- What is the dominant effect of this poem? In other words, just what impact does the poem have on readers? What does it convey? What response does it evoke? Why did the poet write the poem?
- How does each part of the poem contribute to this dominant effect?

In order to proceed with a close reading, there are a couple of things that you need to be sure about. First of all, you need to feel that you understand the poem on a literal level. This may require you to paraphrase a poem. The second thing is that you need a good handle on the different elements of a poem. In a close reading, you have to deal with everything: style, content, imagery, and structure.

1. Build yourself a checklist of all the elements of poetry that you know—for example, imagery and irony. You can do this by going back through this module. If you think of elements that haven't been mentioned in the module, add them to your list.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 4: Lesson 2 on page 201.

Some students regard a close reading of a poem as a sure way to ruin the work. They feel that they're being asked to place the poem under a microscope and methodically dissect it. This response indicates a misunderstanding of just what a close reading is. While such a cold and methodical approach would probably demonstrate your technical knowledge of poetry, it wouldn't reveal your ability to understand poetry and recognize its subtleties.

A close reading isn't about ruining a poem but rather about illuminating its complexities. If poetry makes you slow down, stop, and look at the world, then a close reading makes you slow down even more, to stop and look at the poem. To do a close reading, you focus on and savour the words and watch for things in the poem that you may not have seen at first. In essence, learning how to do a close reading is like learning how to *see*.

You'll have the chance to practise slowing down and reading closely right now.



Ms. Kim: You've already developed a lot of the skills necessary for doing a close reading; but before you try your hand at an entire poem, why don't you try a "mini" close reading.

Carmen: You mean a close reading of a very short poem?

Tyson: Or a close reading of just one line of a poem?

Ms. Kim: Those are both excellent ways to practise close reading. What I'd like to suggest is a close reading of something even shorter—just one word.

Fiona: A whole close reading on one word?

Ms. Kim: Well, for instance, think of the word *blue*. What do you know about that word?

Levi: It's a colour.

Carmen: It's associated with sadness.

Tyson: Yeah, and because of that it refers to a kind of music.

Fiona: To me, the word itself sounds funny, which seems to contrast with its connection to sadness.

Ms. Kim: Are there any comments that you want to make on its structure?

Tyson: It's a short word, just four letters long—one syllable.

Ms. Kim: You've come up with a good list of the connotations of *blue*. You can see how when you look at a word, the meanings that are attached to it go beyond its literal meaning—its denotation. Do you see how with all of this information, you could start to write a close reading on the word *blue*? You'd compile and evaluate all of this information and then decide what you think the dominant effect is.

2. Did the students in Ms. Kim's class identify all the connotations of the word *blue*? Do you have any observations that they may have missed?
3. Go back and reread the definition of *synesthesia* in Writing Folder Suggestion 4Q on page 100 of Section 3: Lesson 3. How does the preceding classroom discussion connect to what you learned about synesthesia there?
4. What would you say the dominant effect of the word *blue* is?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 4: Lesson 2 on page 201.

GOING FURTHER

If you'd like to practise some more "mini" close readings before you tackle an entire poem, here are some suggestions:

- Go back to the favourite words you identified in Lesson 2 of Section 3. Choose **one** and brainstorm all of its connotations, history, and meanings. How do these all combine with sound to produce an effect?
- Choose a proverb. Look at it in terms of sound, structure, and imagery, as well as meaning.
- Choose one line from a favourite poem or any of the poems that you've read in this module.
- Throughout Module 4, you've examined the titles of poems that you've read. Go back to your impressions of **one** of the titles and use those notes to produce a close reading of it.
- Imagine for a moment that your name is a poem about you. Write out your full name (including any middle names) and then use the rest of the page to brainstorm, freewrite, map, or write notes in response to these questions:
 - What does your name look like on the page? Is it long, short, symmetrical?
 - How does each part of your name relate to the other parts? Do they create any kind of contrast? Do they create any kind of unity?
 - How does your name sound? Is it staccato, rhythmic, melodious, muffled?
 - What kinds of connotations does your name have? When people hear it, what do you suppose they think of besides you?
 - What is the history behind your name? Consider its history in light of your own family, as well as cultural, linguistic, or religious origins.
 - How well does your name fit you?

The Close-Reading Process



Now it's time to take the skills that you've just used to do a close reading of a single word and try your hand at a close reading of an actual poem. The poem you'll be reading is by Langston Hughes.

Since you're reading Hughes' poem with the knowledge that you'll be doing a close reading of it, you may choose to condense the first, second, and third levels of response. Throughout Module 4, you've been able to take your time with each level. Sometimes, though—for example, in an exam situation—you need to go through them quickly and efficiently.

5. Go back over the steps that you've taken at each level of response, and produce a condensed version of them. List these condensed steps so you can use them as a checklist.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 4: Lesson 2 on page 202.

Now you'll read Hughes' poem. It may be a poem you're familiar with from a previous course, but this time, you'll likely be analysing it in considerably more depth.

Writing Folder Suggestion 4S

Before reading the poem, look at the title and comment on it. What are your thoughts—your response and your predictions—on reading this title?

Go ahead now and read "Harlem (A Dream Deferred)."¹ You can also listen to one person's oral interpretation of the poem if you go to the *English Language Arts 30-1 Audio CD*.

Harlem (A Dream Deferred)

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

2

6. Mark up the poem with all of your ideas and observations. If necessary, copy it out first and then mark up your own copy.

For helpful comments, see the Appendix, Section 4: Lesson 2 on page 202.

¹ Langston Hughes, "Harlem (A Dream Deferred)," in *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes* (New York: Harold Ober Associates Incorporated, 1994). Reproduced by permission.

² From *THE COLLECTED POEMS OF LANGSTON HUGHES* by Langston Hughes, copyright © 1994 by The Estate of Langston Hughes. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc.



Tyson: The first thing I notice is that “a dream deferred” is bracketed—almost as if it’s being deferred even in the title.

Fiona: Well, I wasn’t sure about what *deferred* means, but I did notice the alliteration right away with all the *ds* in *dream*, *deferred*, *does*, and *dry*. What exactly does *deferred* mean?

Levi: It means to put off or to leave something until later. So the dream isn’t happening right now; it’s been deferred till some future time.

Fiona: Okay, so that makes sense. “A dream deferred” does sound better than “a dream put off.” But you kind of get the sense that the dream hasn’t just been deferred; actually, it seems the dream is just never going to happen.

Carmen: What I found interesting was that the first thing the poem does is ask a question, but then it only answers with more questions. All except for the part that says “Maybe it just sags / like a heavy load,” which is a statement. Maybe there just isn’t an answer. The poem leaves you hanging in that way.

Levi: There are some really strong images that seem to be mainly about things getting old and going bad. Three of them are about food—the raisin, the meat, and the sugar.

Tyson: Yeah, this isn’t a pretty picture. You can also tell by the verbs—*dry up*, *fester*, *run*, *stink*, *crust*, *sugar over*, *sag*, *explode*.

Carmen: That’s right. Most of those verbs are kind of inactive—mouldering or spoiling. But *explode* is really different because it’s fast and powerful. The ending also comes really suddenly. I think that’s because the line is set apart and it’s in italics.

Levi: I suppose you could say that exploding is a fast way of destroying something whereas all the other ways are slow ways of doing it. In that sense, the ending seems kind of ominous. It’s almost as if the last question really does give the answer. I guess it could be a rhetorical question.

Writing Folder Suggestion 4T

Consider the points made by Ms. Kim's students. Do you disagree with any of them? Do you feel that any of them need to be clarified? Do some free-flow writing for a couple of minutes in response to the points they make. Mention any ideas that you came up with as a result of their conversation.

Before you settle down to do your own close reading of Langston Hughes' poem, respond to the following questions.

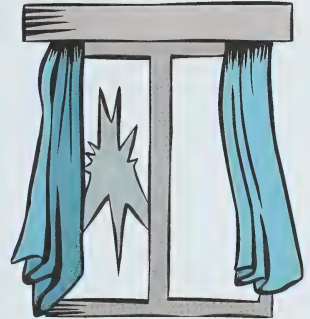
7. What is the situation in "Harlem (A Dream Deferred)"?
8. Who is speaking?
9. Describe the tone of the poem.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 4: Lesson 2 on page 202.

GOING FURTHER

Instead of looking at a poem and deciding on the effect that it creates, here's a chance to start from the other end and work your way back. Look at the following statements that identify the dominant effects of five imagined poems. Choose **one** of the statements and write or describe a poem that matches it.

- The poem is filled with jagged edges, almost as if it's a pane of glass shattered by a stone or fist.
- The subject matter and form of this poem create a dense and inaccessible world. The voice is heavy and distant.
- In this poem, the reader witnesses the speaker's struggle against blindness as she obsessively records minute details, as if in protest of the impending darkness.
- The writer has created a poem that almost floats on the page. This sense of lightness is in contrast to the subject matter, which isn't light at all.
- This poem bursts through with the rapid fire of a stand-up comedian. The reader has the chance to bounce around inside the speaker's off-key mind.



Here are a few pointers to remember when writing a response based on a close reading:

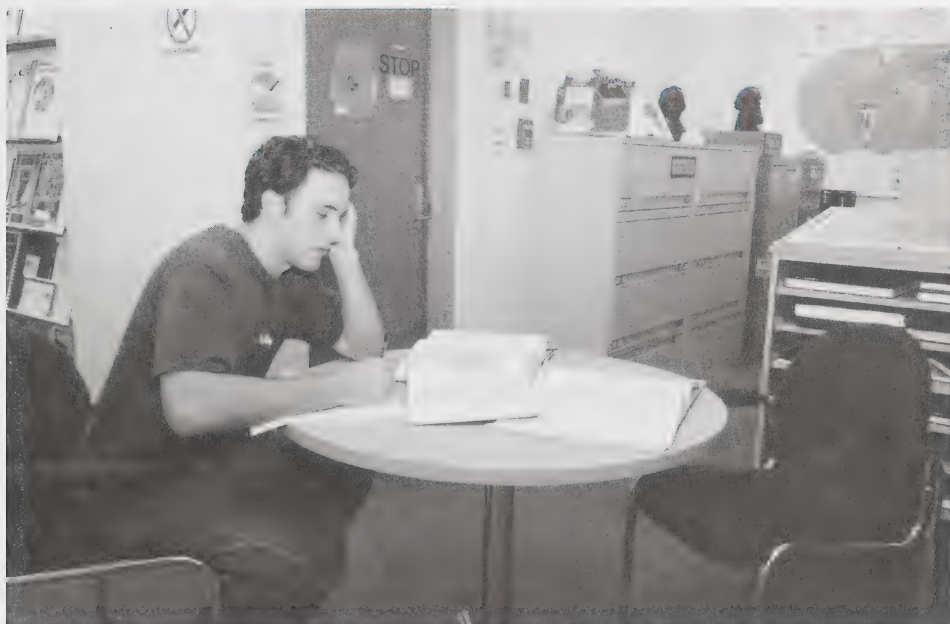
- Be sure you answer this question: What is the dominant effect of this poem?
- In defending your response to the preceding question, be sure that you answer this one: How does each part of the poem contribute to this dominant effect?
- Avoid being mechanical. Listing every element in the poem one by one is tedious to write and to read.
- Avoid simply repeating the entire poem. Every time you include a quotation, ask yourself, “What point is this quotation supporting?”
- Look for elements that go together or create a similar effect. Would they go together well in one paragraph?
- Every time you make a point, be sure to provide the evidence to back it up. Ask yourself, “What evidence supports this point?”
- Incorporate quotations smoothly and accurately.
- If you have several examples that support a particular point, then pick two or three of the strongest.
- The dominant effect shouldn’t boil down to a bumper-sticker message. Be clear but not rigid. Pay attention to nuances—that is, subtleties or shades of meaning.

Now open Assignment Booklet 4B, turn to the Section 4 Assignment, and respond to question 1.

In Lesson 2 you’ve tried your hand at close readings of poetry. Hopefully, you’ve gained an awareness of the demands of the third level of response to poetry—and, by extension, to texts of other sorts—and have come to understand how this level builds on the first and second ones.

The skills you’ve honed in Lesson 2 will serve you well in Lesson 3, where you’ll engage in the process of writing a critical essay on a poem—or a critical essay that compares aspects of two poems.

Lesson 3: The Critical Essay



In Lesson 2, you worked on close reading of a poem. Throughout this process, you might have felt that you were looking at intricate patterns under a microscope.

For a critical essay, you use the same kind of analysis and attention to detail, but you have a wider range of vision; you get to look up from the microscope. The patterns you look at in a critical essay are usually broader than those in a close reading. They might relate to more than one poem (or texts of other sorts); they might relate to a text, such as a poem, and its social context; they might relate to specific questions as they're answered within one or more texts.

The process of writing a critical essay or response arises naturally out of a close reading: you make observations or note patterns and then you ask yourself the same question—*so what?* When you develop a theory to answer that question, you've got a thesis statement—a concept already discussed in Modules 1 and 3 and no doubt familiar from past English language arts courses.

When you hear the word *critical*, negative connotations might come to mind. To be critical, you might think, is to be negative or mean. Within the context of English language arts—and other disciplines too—being critical isn’t about being negative; rather it indicates that you’re engaging in a process of interpretation or evaluation. You’re not necessarily examining what’s wrong with a text or how it could be made better; far from it. Being critical means you’re reading a text analytically and asking serious questions about it. The word *criticism* refers to any analytical approach to literature.

In Module 3, you spent a good deal of time reading, thinking about, and writing essays. You didn’t actually write a complete critical essay, though you did develop a thesis, write a possible introduction and conclusion, and create an outline for one. Now, however, you’re going to put together an entire critical essay—or, as it’s sometimes called, a critical response—to a text.

A critical essay, remember, is a short work of prose that offers an analysis of one or more aspects of a literary text. A critical essay usually argues a point and provides evidence to support that point. Though critical essays shouldn’t sound stilted or artificial, they’re normally written in a register, or level of language, that’s on the more formal end of the scale.

Put simply, then, the main thing a critical essay does is make a proposal, or a statement, about a text and then argue that statement by providing evidence that supports it. That central idea is expressed in your thesis statement.

Thesis Statements



A thesis statement, as you’ll recall, is a statement that presents a thesis or controlling idea—the central point a writer wants to make. As such, it’s a conclusion, a generalization, or a position. The Greek root of the word *thesis* means *place* or *position*. A thesis statement indicates your stance. If you ever find yourself embroiled in a conversation about a controversial topic or about something you strongly believe in, you likely find it very easy to take a stand. You also might find it very easy to argue why you believe what you do. You might make statements something like these:

- “Yes, I agree with Y, and these are my reasons.”
- “I believe X, and here’s why I believe it.”

Arguing about poems (or other literary texts) can seem a little weird, but that’s exactly what you do in English language arts. You may find it harder to take a stand when arguing about literature than about other things because you may not have an emotional investment in the argument or you may not have had to think about the ideas or elements in those particular texts before. Also, the arguments, like many of the effects in a poem, are often quite subtle. In many ways it’s easier and more fun to argue passionately about something that has clearly defined sides.

Thesis statements can be tricky. Not everything you might say about a text qualifies as a thesis statement. Some things you say might be simple observations.

It isn't that difficult to make a straightforward observation about a poem, but it can be very difficult to draw a conclusion about that observation and thereby construct a proper thesis statement. In making a move from observation (flat-out statement) to making a point (thesis), you make an observation and then ask yourself questions like these:

- So what?
 - What effect does this create?
 - What does this particular element of the poem do?
 - Is this particular element or aspect effective?
1. Examine the following sentences and decide whether they're "flat-out" observations or whether they make a point that can be argued (true thesis statements).
 - a. Motion uses imperfect rhyme extensively in her poem "Rhyme on My Mind Pt. 1."
 - b. The image of the geese in Mary Oliver's poem "Wild Geese" provides an organizing principle for the poem.
 - c. The voice in Wislawa Szymborska's poem "A Word on Statistics" is deceptively cold and clinical.



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 4: Lesson 3 on page 202.

Here's a quick checklist of how you can identify or test the strength of a thesis statement. In a properly constructed thesis statement,

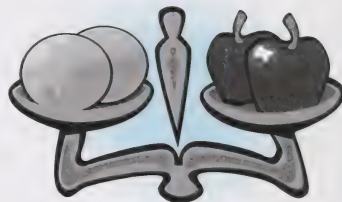
- an effect is identified
- an arguable proposal is presented (that is, an arguable statement is made)
- an observation is included (but it doesn't stop there)
- there's an attempt to answer the question, "So what?"

Comparison/Contrast

Sometimes, you might be asked to write a short critical essay in which you compare two texts in some way—perhaps two poems or two stories, for example, or maybe even texts from different genres—like a story and a poem. Now, how does all you’ve been learning about thesis statements change when you take two texts and look at them both? Actually, it doesn’t change that much. The same principle applies: you make an observation about both texts and then decide on the effect.

In order to make a successful comparison, however, you need to have some kind of rationale behind the observation you make. In other words, you need to have a reason to compare the texts; it’s almost as if they already need to be linked so that the argument you launch will be able to stand up. You’ve probably heard people use the phrase “It’s like apples and oranges”—meaning that two things are so different they just can’t be compared. The implication is that you need to compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges.

2. Use the apples-and-oranges principle to assess the effectiveness of the following comparative observations.
 - a. Motion and William Blake both use rhyme.
 - b. Iman Mersal relies on images of the hospital in her poems “Simply Sleeping” and “Dividers.”
 - c. Iman Mersal and Marilyn Dumont both refer to their parents in their poems.



Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 4: Lesson 3 on page 203.

Since this is a module on poetry, the sorts of comparative critical essays you’ll be working with will involve two poems. If two poems are to be critically compared, there must be some points of contact between them that will enable a productive comparative essay. Here are some viable bases for comparisons between two poems:

- They have similar subjects with different effects.
- They have similar subjects and similar effects.
- They were written by the same poet.
- They have similar subjects but were produced by different poets who are linked in some way, for example, gender, race, era, age, culture, or approach.
- They have similar subjects but were produced by different poets who are different in some way (gender, race, era, age, culture, approach).
- They use similar techniques or forms but treat different subjects.

Finding a Thesis

Because the thesis or controlling idea is the central organizing principle of a critical essay, it's crucial that you spend the necessary time developing it in the early stages of your writing process. This doesn't mean that you can't change or adjust it as you're writing your essay. You may come across a piece of evidence that you didn't notice earlier. Nonetheless, in order to write a strong and focused essay, you need a strong and focused thesis. In order to do that, you need to identify a topic that interests you (unless, of course, the topic has been stipulated by an outside source—your teacher, for instance). Perhaps the process can best be represented in the following diagram.

topic → **observation** → **thesis statement**

If you've gone through the first two levels of response with the text or texts you're working with, then you'll be in a good position to begin your third level. All of the work—any notes, webs or concept maps, free-flow responses, initial reactions—that you had in the first two levels of response will provide you with fodder for your critical writing. In a sense, the first two levels are your brainstorming.

The first thing to do is to sift back through all of those jottings and writings to see if there's something that attracts you. It might be a personal challenge to write about one or two poems that you hate, but it probably won't be very much fun for you or for your reader. If given a choice, migrate toward poems that you like; if the poems are assigned, choose a particular aspect that you find interesting, if possible.



Once you've picked a topic, then you should brainstorm, freewrite, or map it out again in case anything new comes up or anything has changed since your first- and second-level responses. What patterns emerge in the brainstorming? Is there any striking question that jumps out? Looking at one poem in light of another also might lead you to new observations.

3. Try this process out now. Go back through the poems that you've read in Module 4 or on your own and brainstorm a potential topic for a comparative essay—an essay comparing two poems.
4. Once you've brainstormed your topic, identify the specific observation that you'd like to discuss.
5. Finally, work that observation into a well-formulated thesis statement.

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 4: Lesson 3 on page 203.

Writing the Essay

Here's a reminder of some of the elements that you'll need to pay attention to as you write. Note that these elements naturally hold true for a critical essay involving texts of any sort, but only poems are referred to specifically.

Requirements of a Critical Essay

- **Analysis.** A thesis statement is required, and points to support that thesis must be evident in each paragraph. Otherwise, the essay becomes a simple retelling of the poem or poems.
- **Evidence.** You must provide details from the poems to support all of your points.
- **Organization.** Evidence and analysis must be balanced in focused paragraphs.
- **Voice.** Your own voice should ring out clearly.
- **Register.** An appropriate choice must be made regarding the tone and diction of an essay.

An essay also has structural requirements. These, as you should well know, include an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. These elements shouldn't be randomly thrown together. They complement each other; they interlock, providing a clear path for the reader through your argument. Like poetic forms, the essay provides a template for the reader.

In Module 3, you spent some time thinking about the three parts of an essay—introduction, body, and conclusion. Looking back only if you have to, respond to the three questions that follow.

6. What would you say makes a strong introduction in any essay?
7. What elements characterize the body of an essay?
8. What are some effective ways of writing a conclusion to an essay?

Compare your responses with those in the Appendix, Section 4: Lesson 3 on page 204.

By the time you've formulated your thesis statement, you'll probably already have gathered most of your evidence—including details and quotations from the poems. This evidence will make up the body of your essay. Each paragraph must make a point that supports your thesis and then provide evidence to support that point. Try for at least three body paragraphs, but ultimately the number you have will be dictated by the number of points you wish to make.



Levi: In the past, teachers have taught us to write five-paragraph essays whenever we do work of this sort. There's an introduction where you present your thesis, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Period.

Ms. Kim: That's been the traditional way of teaching formal essay writing for a long, long time. And if you find writing essays intimidating, you can fall back on that template for security. You should certainly introduce your thesis in the introduction, but it would be a shame, if you had five or six good points to make, to limit yourself to three paragraphs with one point in each.

Fiona: We've also been given templates for constructing our introductions and conclusions: "In the poem 'Harlem (A Dream Deferred)' Langston Hughes yada, yada, yada. This essay will show that . . ." Are we supposed to move away from those patterns too?

Ms. Kim: Those patterns are always safe, and they can help you get the job done; so use them if you must. Certainly your introduction should identify the text or texts you're discussing, the writer or writers, and your thesis. But if you plan to write a lively, interesting essay that makes your audience want to read on, try experimenting a bit. Review some of the ideas and examples from Module 3. Remember to balance your own voice with the formal conventions of a critical essay.

Tyson: Yeah. I mean, you could start like this: " 'What happens to a dream deferred?' With this question, Langston Hughes begins his poem 'Harlem (A Dream Deferred)'." That could grab a reader's attention, and then you could get into your thesis.

Ms. Kim: You're right. But don't get slaphappy when writing a critical essay. If you feel confident, take a few chances; but if you're going to err, it's better to err on the side of convention.



9. One challenge that's involved in writing a critical essay is figuring out how to organize your evidence. Suggest some useful organizational strategies for an essay that compares two poems. If possible, work with a partner to generate ideas.

Compare your response with the one in the Appendix, Section 4: Lesson 3 on page 204.

Your critical essay will likely undergo several stages. From rough notes, in which the organizational structure may only be hinted at, you'll produce a rough draft that sketches out the basics and then a final draft in which details are complete, organization is sewed up, and any language glitches are smoothed out. Your essay will almost certainly require revision after the rough-draft stage, but if you've done a thorough job in the early stages, these revisions won't be drastic.

In Lesson 3, you've honed your third-level response skills as you've prepared to write a critical essay. The formal writing skills you've worked on should prove valuable for you in your future study of poetry and literature in general as well as in many other aspects of your life that require clear communication and focused arguments.

Now turn to Assignment Booklet 4B and complete the remaining questions for this section.



*C*onclusion



Section 4 has focused on the third level of response to poetry. In this section, you've worked on your skills in doing close readings of poems and writing critical essays about poetry. These are two major accomplishments! The process of developing an argument and writing an essay is a very demanding one. It requires attention to detail, strong writing skills, and innovative thinking. You'll get the chance to work on your critical-essay-writing skills more in future modules.

M

odule Summary

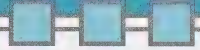


Congratulations! You've just worked through a rather demanding module. You've read, written, listened to, experimented with, and analysed poetry—almost everything that can be done with poetry except eat it. In the process, you should have gained insight into poetry and its place in contemporary culture. You've examined the relationship between poetry and prose. You've become aware of historical trends that have governed poetry and of its origin in—and connection to—sound and rhythm. Hopefully, you've developed understanding of poetic elements and how poets use them.

Module 4 has provided you with a basis for any future study of poetry. It may also have sparked your interest in writing poetry by giving you the chance to formulate original poems of your own. The skills that you've developed—in observation, attention to detail, writing, arguing, innovation, listening, communicating—are all transferable. Wherever your interests lie, they'll serve you well.

Now turn to Assignment Booklet 4B and complete the Final Module Assignment.

Appendix



Glossary
Suggested Responses
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accentual-syllabic system: the system that has evolved in the English language to both create and analyse rhythm in poetry

aesthetics: qualities relating to beauty

alliteration: the practice of repeating a sound at the beginnings of a series of words or a consonant that isn't necessarily at the beginnings

allusion: a reference, explicit or implicit, to someone or something with which a text creator assumes the audience will be familiar—often a historical, literary, or mythological person or event

anapestic metre: a rhythmic pattern based on three syllables, the first two unstressed and the third stressed

apostrophe: the addressing of a thing, place, idea, or absent person as if present and able to understand

assonance: the repetition of vowel sounds, usually close together, not necessarily at the beginning of the word

ballad: a narrative poem originally meant to be sung

base rhythm: the metre that occurs most frequently in a poem

bathos: the trite, sentimental results of a writer's or artist's failure to achieve pathos

blank verse: poetry written in unrhyming iambic pentameter

cacophony: the effect created by sounds that are dissonant or harsh

caesura: a strong pause in a poetic line, sometimes signalled by punctuation, but having no impact on the metre

canon: a group of works, often seen as accepted works or best works

closed-form poetry: the opposite of open-form or free-verse poetry; poetry that relies on an established pattern of rhythm and/or rhyme

close reading: a step-by-step analysis and explication of a text

concept map: a web or mind map that connects ideas related to a single idea by means of clusters surrounding it

concrete poetry: poetry created by making designs or shapes out of letters or words

confessional poetry: a fairly recent movement in poetry in which poets feature the drama of their own lives, often revealing intimate and painful detail

consonance: the repetition of consonant sounds, usually close together, not necessarily at the beginning of a word

dactylic metre: a rhythmic pattern based on three syllables, the first stressed and the next two unstressed

Dadaism: an artistic movement in Europe after World War I that rejected the conventional laws of beauty to create art based on irrationality

- dimeter:** a line of poetry consisting of two feet
- discipline:** a branch of learning or instruction such as English language arts or mathematics
- dramatic monologue:** in poetry, a speech delivered by one specific character and usually addressed to an imaginary audience
- dramatic poetry:** poetry in which an imagined character speaks directly without any narration by the writer
- dub poetry:** a contemporary poetic form with roots in reggae music
- elegy:** a lyric poem that mourns the death of a person, often someone the poet admired or loved
- elision:** the practice in poetry of slurring or dropping a syllable in a word in order to create euphony or sustain a particular rhyme
- end rhyme:** rhyming words at the ends of two or more lines
- end-stopped:** a situation that occurs when the end of a line of poetry corresponds with a caesura, sometimes signalled by punctuation
- enjambment:** a situation that occurs when there is no pause at the end of a line of poetry and one line flows freely into the next line without pause
- euphony:** the effect created by sounds that are melodious and pleasing to the ear
- explication:** an unfolding of a text (such as a poem) that proceeds line-by-line
- extended metaphor:** an explicit comparison that's carried throughout a text and is based on several similarities between two things
- falling metre:** a metre with a basic foot that ends with an unstressed syllable such as trochaic or dactylic feet
- feminine rhyme:** a type of end rhyme in which the final rhyming syllable in each line is unstressed and the stressed syllable that comes before it also rhymes; also known as double rhyme
- figures of speech:** expressions in which words are used in unusual ways to create special effects
- foot:** the basic unit of rhythm in poetry, usually consisting of two or three syllables that are stressed or unstressed in a consistent order
- free verse:** poetry that has no particular length, structure, rhythm, or rhyme pattern
- haiku:** unrhymed poetry of Japanese origin, in which there are three lines containing five, seven, and five syllables respectively
- heptameter:** a line of poetry consisting of seven feet
- hexameter:** a line of poetry consisting of six feet
- high culture:** forms of art and expression that are generally highly esteemed and often considered elite
- iambic metre:** a rhythmic pattern based on two syllables, the first unstressed and the second stressed
- imagery:** words used to "paint" pictures or create sensations for the reader or listener
- imperfect rhyme:** rhyme in which the vowel sounds are different but the final consonants, if any, are the same; also known as slant, off, or half rhyme
- internal rhyme:** rhyming words within one line
- limerick:** a light, usually humorous, poetic form consisting of five anapestic lines (lines 1, 2, and 5 having three feet, and lines 3 and 4 having two feet) and with a rhyme scheme of **aabba**

literature: a body of texts that are written

low culture: art forms that exhibit mass appeal and are often judged to be of less noble purpose and lower artistic worth than the high-culture forms

lyric poetry: poetry written in ancient times to be accompanied by the lyre; modern poems that are usually short and emphasize a particular moment, image, thought, or emotion through the eyes of a single speaker

masculine rhyme: a type of end rhyme in which the final rhyming syllables are stressed

metonymy: a figure of speech in which one thing is mentioned in place of another thing with which it's closely associated

metre: the patterns created by the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables in a poem

mnemonic device: a short rhyme that helps you remember something

monometer: a line of poetry consisting of one foot

narrative poetry: poetry—like ballads, epics, and romances—that tells a story complete with character and plot

octameter: a line of poetry consisting of eight feet

ode: a lyric poem, usually in the form of an apostrophe

onomatopoeia: the use of a word that mimics an actual sound

oral tradition: the stories and history of a culture that are commonly told but not written down

orature: a body of texts that are spoken

paraphrase: restate a passage in your own words in order to ensure understanding

pathos: a strong sense of pity or sadness that is evoked by powerful writing or art

pentameter: a line of poetry consisting of five feet

perfect rhyme: rhyme in which the vowels and final consonants of the rhyming syllables sound exactly the same; also known as true rhyme

personification: the ascribing of human qualities to things that are not human

prose poem: a piece of writing in prose format but poem-like in its use of language

refrain: a set of lines, words, or phrases that is repeated exactly or almost exactly at regular intervals throughout a poem

register: the level of language one chooses to use in different situations; the levels range from very informal, colloquial language to very formal

repetition: the repeating of a word, phrase, or idea to create emphasis

rhyme: the placement of two or more words close together in order to emphasize the similarity in their sounds

rhyme scheme: a pattern of end rhyme in a poem

rhythm: the sense of movement in prose or in poetry, created by the arrangement of sounds, words, lines, or stanzas

rising metre: a metre with a basic foot that ends with a stressed syllable such as iambic or anapestic foot

scansion: the identification of stressed and unstressed syllables in a poem, also known as *prosody* or *versification*

schwa: the undistinguished vowel sound given to unstressed syllables in most English words

sight rhyme: rhyme in which the words look identical but sound different; also known as eye rhyme

simile: an explicit comparison in which one thing is likened to another, signaled by the use of the words *as* or *like*.

soliloquy: in drama, a speech delivered by a character alone on stage expressing his or her thoughts and feelings

sonnet: a 14-line poem with a fixed rhyme scheme

speaker: the narrator of a poem

spondaic metre: a rhythmic pattern based on two syllables both of which are stressed

stanza: a grouping of lines in a poem

synecdoche: a figure of speech whereby a part of something is given to represent the whole

tetrameter: a line of poetry consisting of four feet

trimeter: a line of poetry consisting of three feet

triple rhyme: a kind of feminine rhyme that involves the rhyming of the three final syllables in two or more lines, usually for comic effect

trochaic metre: a rhythmic pattern built on two syllables, the first one stressed and the second one unstressed

understatement: the representation of something as less than it is, often for humorous effect

verse: one line of a poem

villanelle: a complicated poetic form introduced to England from France

Suggested Responses

Section 1: Lesson 1

1. You may have chosen to fill in the one or both of the charts. Because everyone has an individual experience and enjoyment level when it comes to poetry, responses will be different for everyone. Following are some possible top-ten reasons.

Top Ten Reasons to Read Poetry

- *Poetry slows you down.*
- *It gives you a sense of history.*
- *It can be interesting, relaxing, or inspiring.*
- It broadens your world by giving you a glimpse into a different moment, place, or experience.
- It lets you share an experience with other readers.
- It can give you ideas about your own poems or your own writing.
- It can be cathartic (healthful in that it releases tension and creates a feeling of peace).
- It can teach you things about yourself.
- It's fun. You get to see someone ditch all the rules and just fool around with language.
- It's short and it goes well with music.
- It can increase your vocabulary.

Top Ten Reasons Not to Read Poetry

- *Poetry makes nothing happen.*
- *It's a useless endeavour.*
- *The old stuff is outdated.*
- It's difficult to understand.
- It has no practical connection to reality.
- The language is pretentious and annoying.
- Poems are so short, you can't really get into them like a novel or a story.
- It's overly sentimental.
- Poetry books are a rip-off.
- It's way too depressing.

2. a. Everyone's effort at freewriting will be different because of the person and because of the candy. If you like, you can compare your responses with those of people who ate the same kind of candy you did. Did you all notice the same details? Here's a sample showing what one student wrote.

sour and fruity my tongue recoils from the sour and enjoys it at the same time the sensation spreads from the little hard block backwards like goosebumps. the rich fruity flavour stops jumping on my tongue and it slides down my throat like washed out orange. Gritty little candy stuck in my teeth, pulling my fillings out, making my jaw crack.

Remember that when you're freewriting, you're concentrating on getting all your thoughts down in as much detail as possible and as quickly as possible. Attention to spelling and grammar is secondary.

- b. You've likely never paused to savour a candy this way before. That in itself makes eating the candy a new experience. You had to concentrate and pay more attention, so the experience might have felt richer and more detailed. Perhaps the flavour even felt more intense.
- c. Did the words come to you easily or not? Because you were free-flow writing, you may not have had the chance to think of the right words to describe the candy. You may even have included some words that weren't quite right. Sometimes you have to go through a few wrong words before you get to the right one, which is what the freewriting process is for. You get to include all of the possible options; for instance, your freewriting may have looked like this: "fruity, green like citrus, no sour, lemon acidic pungent powerful."

If you were going to use your freewriting as the basis for a poem, you'd have a number of options to choose from!

3. Here are some ways in which photos and poems might be seen as similar. Compare this list with your own.

- They both capture and freeze a brief moment.
- They both provide a frame for that moment. The photo's frame is determined by the viewfinder—the actual edges of the photograph. In a poem, the moment is framed by the beginning and end point that's established by the poet.
- Often what's left out of a poem or a photograph is as important as what's in it.
- Neither really has enough time or space to tell a whole story.
- They're both short and can be read or looked at quite quickly.
- Because they're short, they're compressed. Everything that the photographer or poet wants to happen has to happen in that one moment.
- They both contain visual elements. A poem is visual both in the shape it has on the page and in the imagery that's created within it.

4. The primary difference between a photo and a poem is probably the poem's connection to sound. A poem can be read aloud or silently. A photo can be looked at, but it can be expressed aloud only if it's described in words.
5. Sylvia Plath's description of how a poem takes place is vivid and detailed. In your mind's eye, you may have actually seen and heard a door opening and closing and even glimpsed a rainstorm or a dragonfly behind it. By using this metaphor, Plath seems to say that a poem is short: it lasts as long as it takes to open and close a door. She could also be saying that a poem is well defined; it has a definite beginning and a definite ending. The things she mentions that you might glimpse on the other side of the door are all pretty different, which seems to imply that a poem can be about something as large and complicated as a city or as small as a dragonfly.
6. The object that intrigues you most will be entirely subjective. It will depend on your personal approach towards poetry. Sometimes poems focus on very small and detailed objects such as dragonflies. They can also encompass something big and complicated like a heart of a city. Nonetheless, the list Plath chooses is very evocative and almost becomes a poem itself.
7. Responses will vary. Do you use any of the strategies suggested in the question? Do you use others? The important thing here is that you become sensitive to the strategies you use, monitor them for their effectiveness, and try to become aware of other strategies that might help improve your skills.
8. a. "The Unshakeable Man in Aldergrove" by Shani Mootoo

The title of this poem seems very formal, as if a scientist might have written it under the portrait of one of his subjects. There must be something interesting about this man, although being "unshakeable" doesn't seem that dramatic. It also makes you wonder where Aldergrove is. Shani Mootoo is a Canadian writer and visual artist who's perhaps best known as a novelist.

- b. "1996" by Gregory Scofield

This is a very short, almost cold, title that doesn't give a lot of clues away. Perhaps it refers to a time or a specific incident in the poet's life. Gregory Scofield is a Metis poet from Western Canada.

- c. "Jesse Meets His Future Wife, Zee Mimms" by Paulette Giles

This title is pretty long and complicated partly because it includes two names. It's set up as a sentence, and it almost has a story within it. At least you know one thing happens: the two people meet. The name *Zee Mimms* is interesting, too. Paulette Giles is a Canadian poet who has written a whole collection of poems about Jesse James.

9. You may have had many different impressions of the title "Wild Geese." You may have identified it as a very lonely, cold image. One image that comes to mind is geese flying south before winter comes. If the poem had simply been called "Geese," a more domesticated image might have come to mind—white geese that live on a farm and swim on a pond. That image would not have been as wild or cold but much tamer, almost like geese in a storybook.

0. Your free-flow response will be unique. Your feelings about the poem and the parts you noticed or commented on will be influenced by your own experiences and attitudes. Following is a sample freewriting response.

I thought that it would be a stupid poem about nature but I really like this poem. I am not really into nature but geese and other parts of nature in this poem like mountains and prairies and sun make it a very beautiful poem. The clean blue air is attractive. I thought it would be cloudy like in November. It is a lonely poem. They must be Canada geese. I guess it means that you should take off like the geese and just go somewhere or go home. If they are going home are they going south or north? I think the home must be in the north because that is where they would nest. It feels like fall in this poem but I guess that it could also be spring. It is sort of a depressing poem but also beautiful.

1. Whether the poem spoke to you or not is again entirely individual. Some people may find such a poem completely unappealing or alienating. Others may feel very moved by it. Some readers find the poem speaks to them very powerfully because it insists on everyone's "place / in the family of things."
2. Likely the first image that you noticed in the poem was in the title: "Wild Geese." The poem itself is full of images. The images that are mentioned in the first half of the poem include the desert, walking on knees, soft animal, sun, clear pebbles of the rain, prairies, and deep trees.
3. You probably know that it's a poem because you were told to read the poem by Mary Oliver. If you were simply presented with a piece of paper with writing on it, you would probably decide whether or not it was a poem by looking at the way that the words were set up on the page. Prose tends to go from one margin to the other; it doesn't matter where the line ends. Poetry tends to be set up more carefully. It does matter where the line ends, so often poetry doesn't go from one margin to the other.

Section 1: Lesson 2

1. a. Whether or not your experience changes when the poem is set up from margin to margin probably depends on you and your specific reading experience. It certainly changes at the most basic level; for instance, your eyes have to travel differently. It may also change how you "hear" the poem inside your head. Poems are usually arranged to capture some kind of rhythm, and the line breaks play a part in the rhythm. Extending the lines from margin to margin changes that rhythm. Because on first glance you would probably guess that the writing is prose, you also might approach it with different expectations.
- b. This question is a bit tricky; it's not entirely clear-cut. There are many poets who write poetry with long lines, if not margin-to-margin, then almost margin-to-margin. Line breaks may not be as important in their poems as they are in the poems of other people. However, were this poem to be changed, something would be lost that Mary Oliver included in it when she decided on the line breaks. However, other poetic elements aren't lost. Whether the lines of the poem change, there are still strong images and powerful language—both characteristics of poetry.

2. a. The definition that resonates most with you will depend on your own experience of, and attitude toward, poetry. Perhaps Gerald Stern's is too simplistic and Emily Dickinson's is overly dramatic. William Shakespeare's might be the most difficult to understand. Joy Harjo's definition may have made you feel warm and fuzzy. Sharon Olds' and Basho's definitions are certainly clear. Perhaps you're drawn to the no-nonsense approach of W. H. Auden.
- b. There are many points raised by these poets that may spark disagreement. If you think that poetry is magic, you'll disagree with W. H. Auden. If you believe that poetry is about soothing the soul, then Emily Dickinson's definition won't match your own. If you believe that poetry does have a practical use—such as to help medical students become better doctors—then you'll disagree with Basho's definition. Joy Harjo's comment is quite controversial. Is poetry all about love?
- c. The one definition that is actually written in poetry is William Shakespeare's. Many of the others, though they are written in prose, are quite evocative. Several poets draw quite poetic comparisons between poetry and other objects.
- d. There are a number of strong images in these definitions. Perhaps the most concrete are by Sharon Olds, who mentions steam valves, and Basho, who likens poetry to "a stove in the summer or a fan in the winter." Emily Dickinson's words provoke quite an image: imagine the top of her head being blown off.
- e. The poets who offer up these definitions cover a lot of different ground. Some of them overlap and some of them pull against each other. Auden's insistence that poetry "disintoxicates" could be likened to Victor Hernandez Cruz' belief that poetry gives "flashes, which illuminate those things which were mysterious to us." In both cases, you might say that the magic diminishes, the mystery is removed. Olds' reference to "ordinary people" and "ordinary feelings" also seems to line up with these two definitions. Others seem a little more dreamy. Stern refers to remembering, Harjo refers to "an electrical force field which is love," and Rich refers to dreaming. All these references seem to be to slightly magical processes.
3. a. The parts of Todd Swift's definition that you found surprising or inaccurate will depend on your individual experience and knowledge of poetry. Here are some things you might have noticed:
- Poetry is often linked with themes that are considered universal, so it may have been surprising to hear Swift say that poetry deals primarily "with intersections of the universal and personal."
 - You may feel that poetry commonly covers themes other than the ones mentioned.
 - The description of poetry as an "experiment" may have surprised you.
- b. Your response will depend on your own definition of poetry. Todd Swift's definition is probably more detailed than your own, but did any of your priorities match with his?

- c. Swift might be saying that poetry is undefinable because it can be very elusive. It's hard to pin down exactly what is poetry and what isn't. On the other hand, he might be saying that it's undefinable because there are so many definitions of it. Perhaps people constantly try to define it for themselves so they can pinpoint what their objective is when they write it or when they read it. Poetry isn't quite like many other art forms. The idea, say, of someone bothering to define pottery or painting seems unusual, though of course, it also happens.
- d. (1) According to Todd Swift, poetry continually returns to "love, death, time, memory, family, nature, beauty, history and the gods." There may be other themes that you feel were missing: what about pain, war, childhood, ugliness?
- (2) Perhaps humans are preoccupied with these themes because they're the most closely connected to the passions that drive us. These themes may be what ultimately defines each individual's life.
- e. "Level of diction" refers to the language available to the poet. Todd Swift implies that no matter what kind of language is available to the poet—colloquial, formal, grammatically incorrect, a dialect—it's suitable for writing poetry. At certain times in the history of the English language (and other languages too), only the most formal language could be used to write poetry and therefore only the most highly educated could write and enjoy it.
- f. The following charts lists the aspects of poetry that Swift mentions and identifies them as related to form or to content.

Aspects of Poetry	
Form/Structure/Aesthetics	Subject/Content/Inspiration
• <i>written</i> • <i>spoken</i> • <i>sound</i> • music • full capacity of language • any level of diction • sung • acted • recorded • printed	• <i>limits of experience</i> • <i>limits of imagination</i> • <i>any theme</i> • any subject • intersections of universal and personal • love • death • time • memory • family • nature • beauty • history • gods

- g. Swift describes poets as part of a long tradition. They are, according to him, serious and dedicated and they "fully respect the profound contexts and communities their work connects." According to Swift, poets may become better and more knowledgeable with time and experience.

- h. This question calls to mind the different expectations that readers have of prose and of poetry. Think about why people read prose and why people read poetry. How do the situations differ? Today, information is conveyed to most readers in prose. When people read prose, they're more likely to see it as accurate, serious, and factual.

Section 1: Lesson 3

- Did you suggest that poetry or prose developed first? Many students think that prose developed first because to them prose feels “normal” as a way of communicating. Poetry on the other hand seems to be a highly specialized “offshoot” of prose. Actually, poetry developed as an art form and a written means of communication before prose in all languages throughout the world. There are many reasons for this. Poetry is closely related to song, and people sang and wrote songs before they wrote prose. Prose didn’t really come to prominence in Europe until the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg at around 1450. William Caxton set up the first printing press in England in 1476. Prior to this moment in history, mass distribution of printed material wasn’t possible as it is today. Poetry was a “normal” way of communicating, which also makes sense because literacy rates were low and people relied on oral communication to pass on information.
- The moments that you identify will depend on your experience. You might expect to encounter poetry instead of prose inside a greeting card, on a bathroom wall, at a ceremonial occasion such as a wedding or a funeral, in a prayer book, in something written by a small child, or in a children’s book. Are there other examples?
- Responses may vary somewhat, but most people—even those who don’t particularly enjoy poetry—feel that there’s something special and important about poetry. Naturally, a special type of writing seems to fit well with a special and important occasion.
- You may identify many different characteristics of prose and poetry; some of the associations you make may be stereotypes. Both genres are quite flexible, and writers are always experimenting with them; so it’s important to remember that not all of the characteristics identified in the following chart are fixed in stone. For instance, you might say that prose is more concerned with ideas and poetry is more concerned with emotion, but you’ve probably read extremely emotional prose as well as poetry that focused on ideas rather than emotions.

Here’s one chart put together by a class of students working with a teacher. Compare it with your own.

	Prose	Poetry
Characteristics	• has plainer, less pretty language • doesn't always depend on imagination • has more practical goals • uses longer, full sentences and proper grammar	• uses concentrated and more complicated language • throws out rules of grammar • is imaginative • attempts to say something significant or to achieve beauty

Characteristics (Continued)	• is more concerned with content than sound • can have rhythm but it's not crucial • seems more immediate • seems more authoritative • seems more objective and rational • is built around ideas • is more accurate in telling a story or narrative • is straightforward, to-the-point	• is melodic and rhythmic • is concerned with sound not just content • seems more subjective • is specific and concrete • appeals to the senses • is built around images • is playful, joyful, mysterious • is indirect and less straightforward or commonsense • is more connected to the subconscious
Topics	• issues • ideas • truth • history • politics • science • world events • explanations • information • instructions • complicated stories, narratives • anything in the public realm	• emotion • autobiography • love • anything private • children • deep personal moments • beautiful things • nature • aging • "soft" topics

What follows is one possible paraphrase of Michael Ondaatje's poem "Griffin of the Night." You may or may not agree entirely with the way this writer has expressed the poem's meaning.

I'm holding my son in my arms. He has woken up sweating after nightmares. Like him, I feel small, scared, and sorry for myself. His fingers are in his mouth. His other fist is clenched in my hair.

First of all, you probably had to identify the situation and the speaker. Once you understood what was going on, you could change it into prose. There's a bit of a story here that probably makes it easier than if the poem were about a single image or emotion. You probably translated the lines into full sentences, which required you to add punctuation, capitalization, and some words to complete the subject and the predicate. You probably eliminated the repetition of "small me" and "sweating after nightmares."

7. Because the prose piece conforms to conventional rules of grammar, you had to add words to make the sentences complete. Doing this probably makes the prose piece longer.
8. Whether it's expressed in prose or in poetry, the moment is still an evocative one. The moment of waking up to comfort a small, terrified child can be represented successfully in either poetry or prose. In that sense the "content" of the poem isn't erased. However, the poem is more compact and intense. Word for word, it packs more punch. Whatever effect the form has will be diminished in the prose version.
9. Of course, the version that you prefer depends on you! It depends on how powerful you feel the poem is in the first place and what effect you feel its form has. For instance, the repetition of "small me" and "sweating after nightmares" seems to contribute a sense of forlornness or fear on the part of the parent. This effect is lost in the prose version.
10. Again, the preferred version depends on the person you ask. Does he or she feel that a certain mystery or beauty or power is lost in the paraphrase? Or perhaps he or she feels less disoriented by the straightforward language of the prose.
11. The chart shown here gives you an idea as to how the various art forms could have been classified as either high or low culture. Many forms aren't entirely clear-cut. For example a foreign-language film might have popular appeal in the country where it was shot. When it comes to Canada, however, it may fall into the realm of "art" film, appealing only to a small group of people. The tango originated in the slums of Buenos Aires. At one time, it was seen as a vulgar dance for people of questionable morals. But now it's been elevated into a respectable art form with "elite" appeal. The same might be said of music like jazz. Finally, activities such as woodworking or needlework also straddle the two realms. A woodcarver who makes decoys at home for fun is probably participating in low culture. Another person who painstakingly carves intricate furniture out of rare wood to sell at a high price in an art gallery is probably participating in high culture. But their skills may be equivalent, and some day those decoys may be thought of as high art.

High Culture	Low Culture
• art films • avant-garde dance performances • operas • poetry readings • the tango	• needlepoint • nursery rhymes • blockbuster movies • TV talk shows • bluegrass music • Broadway musicals • drumming • hip-hop • woodcarving • home videos

2. a. Some examples of low-culture poetry are

- nursery rhymes, skipping songs, or limericks
- old anonymous ballads that would have been sung by ordinary people centuries ago
- verse that's found in greeting cards or on inspirational posters or plaques that people hang in their homes
- some popular songs
- poems that appear as graffiti
- works of self-published poets who photocopy and distribute their poems in ordinary places (on the street, in school, at the mall)
- poems by local or unknown poets in newspapers or newsletters or on the Internet

Note that labelling a poem as “low culture” doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s not good. It’s just that it lacks that elitist aspect. Any attempts to feature poetry on TV or the Internet or to access other means of mass distribution brings poetry closer to the realm of low culture.

Poetry is commonly used as a means of rehabilitation, therapy, or communication for people in prisons, homeless shelters, and hospitals. As it gains respect as a form of expression for a wider and wider range of people, it becomes more firmly situated in the realm of low culture.

- b. Poetry that’s published or considered “beautiful” can usually be considered high culture. Published collections of a poet’s works, anthologies of poetry, and plays—like Shakespeare’s—written in verse, are examples of high-culture poetry. Much (but not all) of the poetry that’s studied in school is high culture. High-culture poetry is usually produced or performed in such a way that it’s slightly removed from the public at large.

Needless to say, poems that you’ve encountered run the gamut from high to low culture. You’ll notice that certain poems have a mass appeal and may have adopted colloquial language while other poems seem inaccessible and full of highly specialized references. Poets often write poems of both sorts, and the distinction between high and low culture isn’t always clear.

- c. When Audre Lorde claimed “Poetry is not a luxury,” she may have been arguing the importance of poetry as a low-culture phenomenon—something that should be read and written by everyone. She probably also meant that poetry is necessary for a full emotional and intellectual life; it’s not an “extra.” Poets who are concerned about things that they see in the world—injustices like racism, sexism, poverty, war, and hunger, just to name a few—use poetry as a way to increase awareness, to protest, and to bring about change. Poetry can be used to create a voice for people who are otherwise voiceless in the larger society.

14. Statistics are numerical facts that are collected, classified, and analysed to produce information about society or the weather or whatever. They're often seen to be unquestionably objective and true. When you refer to people as "statistics," you usually mean that they're just mere numbers in a much bigger system. Statistics are related to the worlds of research and bureaucracy. Institutions often develop policies according to statistical evidence.
15. You might be confused for a minute because the field of statistics seems about as far removed from poetry as it can be. The title seems more like that of an article in a business magazine.

Writing Folder Suggestion 4C. It's not often that suggested responses are supplied in this course for Writing Folder suggestions or Going Further activities, but just so you can see what free-flow writing can be like, here's one student's response to this suggestion.

A list of things, very depressing but funny a bit haha funny and strange funny. It doesn't seem that she thinks anyone in the world is happy. Is she being sarcastic? Not exactly. Maybe a little bit well wistful or regretful. I can't tell if she wishes that things were different. It's a bit weird for a poem, I haven't read one like this before. The subject is kind of strange just going through like a list. A lot of numbers. I wonder how she came up with them. Just sitting at her desk inventing numbers did she contemplate, "Well, those who are just? That should be 35, no 55, no not that many." Was she trying to be accurate at all? I guess that is a stupid question because even though statistics are supposed to be accurate these ones are so subjective that they are never going to be. I guess that's the thing statistics are supposed to be objective. I really hate statistics. But the good thing about them is that they always work out in some little easy and neat formula.

16. While the poem refers to statistics, it's pretty easy to tell right away that they're made up. First of all, the categories aren't scientific but rather crazy—human attributes or complicated situations. For instance, what scientist would produce a study that shows that 83 out of 100 people end up sooner or later "Balled up in pain / and without a flashlight in the dark"? The poem actually seems to be about humans: how they function; how they are ordinary, alone, or dangerous.
17. The poem provides definite numbers—for example "those who always know better: / fifty-two"—which seems to make it authoritative and certain. However, because other numbers are sketchy such as "sixty, plus or minus", "more than half, for sure", or "twenty-some-odd," that authority seems a little shaky or casual. Since the categories that are being examined don't seem "statistical" but somewhat arbitrary and sometimes darkly comical, the authority of the poem is also undermined. The last line, however, is delivered with the most certainty of all!
18. You may have made several different observations about the form of Szyborska's poem. It comes across as an unending list—not unlike the way statistics are often presented to the public in charts and tables. You also may feel sometimes that you're drowning in statistics as scientists today release study after study. The poem is broken up into little groups that are two to four lines long, almost as if each statistic has its own little stanza. This makes the poem seem stilted, but that seems to go with the idea that statistical studies pump out one fact after another after another. There's no real story in between.

9. The moment that you felt was most powerful in this poem will depend on your personal view. There are moments in the poem that may have stood out for you. For instance the references to people who are “getting nothing out of life except things” or “living in constant fear / of someone or something” seem to provide a little story. There almost seem to be warnings as well; for instance when the poet says “Harmless alone, / turning savage in crowds: /more than half, for sure,” she seems to be pointing out frightening possibilities to the reader. The next statistic she mentions (“Cruel / when forced by circumstances: / it’s better not to know, not even approximately”) indicates that the numbers are so high and the truth so scary that it cannot even be mentioned.

You may have chosen any number of possible moments.

Section 1: Lesson 4

1. a. Your description will depend on the process you chose to write about. Here’s a sample description for you to compare with your own.

The vibration of the sander makes my shoulder and my mind go numb. Dust flies into my eyes. They water furiously, watching another square inch reveal itself under the old finish. I’m tired, but it’s another afternoon spent getting closer to the mystery of this old table. My hands are dry and ratched up from the coarse sandpaper and the dusty wood. Once the table stands naked and bare, I clothe it in a glistening coat of varnish. The bright swirls of the wood jump into the light. When I am done I will cook a sumptuous meal and eat off of it.

- b. Your description will depend on your own writing process. Here’s a sample description of someone’s writing process for you.

Writing is slow and painful. I find that I spend a lot of time staring at the blank page, trying to will the words there. The first words that go down are always clumsy and embarrassing. I cross out, white out, erase, delete and start again. My hand gets sore. As the night goes on, a few more words stay, clinging to the page, hoping that they will do. By the time dawn breaks, my dad is making breakfast and I print out the final copy. The essay looks clean and sharp. There is no way of knowing the mess that it started out as. I look forward to the satisfying moment of handing it in.

2. a. You’ll no doubt have found some similarities and differences in the two processes that you describe. Here are some similarities and differences based on the two examples you’ve looked at.

Both processes are quite slow and take a lot of effort. One takes all night; one takes a few afternoons. When both things are finished, the table and the essay, they are beautiful and there is no evidence about the bad shape that they were once in. They will both provide moments of satisfaction—handing the essay in and eating off the table.

- b. The chart that follows is based on the examples used in the preceding suggested responses.

	First Process	Writing Process
Adjectives	slow, painful, blank, clumsy, embarrassing, final, clean, sharp, satisfying	slow, painful, blank, clumsy, embarrassing, final, clean, sharp, satisfying
Nouns and Pronouns	vibration, sander, shoulder, mind, dust, eyes, inch, finish, afternoon, mystery, table, hands, sandpaper, wood, light, I, meal	writing, I, time, page, words, words, night, words, page, dawn, dad, breakfast, copy, essay, mess
Verbs	makes, go, flies, reveals, getting, are, stands, clothe, jump, cook, eat	is, spend, trying to will, go down, cross out, white out, erase, delete, start, stay clinging, hoping, breaks, is, making, print, looks, knowing, started out, look forward, handing in

Here are a few observations based on this example.

Some of the words overlap but not that many. It seems that the words describing the first process are somehow livelier, maybe because it's a more concrete or interesting process. There's more activity than just sitting at a computer. The words in the second one seem more painful and slow. There's not as much satisfaction at the end. A lot of the same words are repeated such as *I*, *page*, and *words*.

- c. Here's an example, based on the preceding sample responses, to compare with your own. Note that this student didn't stick entirely to all the words used in her first description, but she has used the same sort of vocabulary one could use to describe refinishing a table.

The glistening essay waits below the dull surface of the page. I scrape and sand the cracked words, hoping to polish them to a rich, dark, walnut sheen. Words fly away underneath the buzz of the sander. They are fast and furious. They cover me in so much dust that my eyes water. My muscles ache as I hone and polish. Finally, the bare bones of the essay stand, clear and solid. All the pieces are there, waiting for the final shining coat. With sore shoulders and rough hands, I start to revise.

3. Of course, the comparisons you come up with will depend on the words that you listed. You probably found some comparisons easy to make, others farfetched. Nonetheless, it's good practice for making comparisons that are refreshing and unexpected. Here are some sample comparisons:
- Night arrived like the close of a heavy book.
 - The fox moved, changeable as a gearshift.
 - The thermometer stood rooted like a tree at -35°C .

You may have chosen to write yours as poetry instead of prose. If you discussed your comparisons with the rest of your group, you may have been amazed by the many different, and often intriguing comparisons people came up with.

4. Your first-level response will be unique and individual. Here's a sample freewriting response.

I like this poem mostly because I love fresh baked bread. It smells so good and you could eat it all day, dripping with butter. But I don't think I would have chosen baking bread for my comparison. Though actually cooking could make sense maybe a recipe for a poem which is in a way what he does. The poem seems too short. It seems a little sappy. I wasn't too keen on the "dough of experience" but I liked the ending the "oven of the heart."

5. The memorable image that you chose will depend on you. There are a lot of images in this short poem. Some are visual and some concern movement such as mixing, kneading, and pounding. The lines "it puffs out big / with its own inner force" is quite an evocative image. The fact that the form is "round" may have jumped out at you. Of course, the "oven of the heart" is a very strong metaphor. Can you imagine drawing a representation of it?
6. a. and b. Did you write a whole poem called "A Stanza of Bread"? Many processes have been compared to poetry—from figure skating to photography. The writing process itself may not be best suited to compare with baking bread; perhaps the language of a more physical, or active, pursuit would be a more interesting way to describe the less physical activity of writing. But baking bread is an activity full of sensations, smells, and anticipation; so perhaps the comparison could be made to work.
7. Koriyama seems to imply that writing poetry is as domestic and comforting as baking bread. This meshes with the viewpoints of Neruda and Alegria. Neruda's metaphor connects poetry to bread, making it seem something earthy or natural that ordinary calloused hands can make. Alegria implies that poetry is eaten and shared just as bread is eaten and shared. When Audre Lorde says, "Poetry is not a luxury," she might be implying that—like bread, bannock, tortillas, or roti—poetry is a basic necessity. You need poetry for your everyday sustenance; without it you won't survive.

Section 2: Lesson 1

1. a. Your second-level response will depend on the point that you identified in your first-level response to "Wild Geese." Both responses will be unique to you.

One of the points made in the sample response provided in Section 1: Lesson 1 is that "Wild Geese" is a lonely poem. Here's a sample second-level response based on that point.

There are many reasons to feel that Mary Oliver's poem "Wild Geese" is lonely. First of all the main image, the wild geese "high in the clean blue air," is remote and distant. It's very different, say, from the image of a pet dog or a herd of cows. The images of the wilderness create a sense of solitude. Oliver mentions "the desert," "the world," "prairies," "mountains," and "deep trees." These landscapes are wide and expansive and can be difficult or dangerous. There aren't any homes or people in this poem except for the "you" and the "I," so there is little human warmth or conversation. The "you" and "I" are unnamed and mysterious, but they do make a connection when the speaker says, "Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine." There is a sense of sadness because what the two people have to offer each other is a story of despair. Later in the poem, the cries of the geese emphasize the sense of loneliness though it's also meant to be reassuring because it's "announcing your place / in the family of things."

- b. The overlaps that you discovered depend on your unique response. The sample second-level response in the preceding question seems to overlap with each student's points. Tyson mentions a sense of nostalgia that he connects with flocks of geese; Levi talks about how the solitary human being is made part of the natural world; Fiona mentions the power of the call of the geese; Carmen talks about different aspects of nature.
- c. You may have many observations about the difference between writing a freeflow response and writing a well-structured paragraph. The freeflow response is more intuitive because you write off the top of your head without censoring any thoughts. This probably makes the response quite unfocused as well. Writing a paragraph means taking the time to focus. The focus is provided by the topic sentence, which articulates the point your paragraph is making. When writing a paragraph, you have to look closely at the poem since you need to incorporate evidence from it. Freeflow responses don't require evidence, so they're based much more on opinion and emotion.
2. Your freeflow response will be unique. Here's a sample freewriting response to Ruprai's poem.

This poem pretty much tells a story, and I wonder why she didn't decide to write it in prose. I can imagine it clearly because it almost seems like a movie I wonder why mothers have to interfere in matchmaking because my mother also interferes. My father doesn't—he figures that I can take care of myself. There are huge crowds in this poem. It's much like Canada Day in the city, everyone outside in the sunshine and very happy. It's funny that the mother figures that next time they'll get his phone number when this time they didn't even talk to him. It's an enjoyable poem. It's very ordinary and easy to understand, which I really appreciate. It doesn't blow me away, but I like it.

3. a. There are any number of songs you might have chosen to accompany this poem. You may have chosen something upbeat or romantic since the poem is about a "love match." Perhaps you chose music that speeds up so it mimics the mother's chase. Consider the type of music that you chose. Was it urban? Mellow? Popular? Maybe you turned to the sound track of a Hollywood film?
- b. A number of colours could possibly serve as a backdrop to this poem. The poem points toward the colour red when it mentions the future son-in-law's red turban and the sea of red and white hats. Silver is mentioned in reference to the fireworks at the end, or you might have chosen blue for the sky; though it's not mentioned directly, the day seems to be sunny and hot.
4. a. Your response will be individual. You may find it charming or funny, boring or obvious.
- b. A number of things may have puzzled you. Perhaps the extra-long indent is one of them, or perhaps you wondered why the first stanza is so long.
5. You may have chosen any number of ways to respond to this poem on the first level. Imagine that you decided to record this poem, read aloud over appropriate background sounds. The most obvious sound effect that you'd have to include is that of a bus or a subway. This might mean the noises made by crowds moving and talking on the bus or the sound of a person shuffling and moving in her seat looking for something. Then the conversation would begin. Nowlan doesn't tell us what that conversation is about, but we know that it was pretty short; and once it ends, the recording could go back to the sound of the subway. Perhaps your background sounds could include a nervous laugh when the "glances / accidentally bump." The poem could then end with the sound of someone snoring over the background sounds of the subway.

6. Your second-level response will depend on your first-level response. If, for example, you produced a recording with background sounds such as the one mentioned in the preceding suggested response, your second-level response might have focused on the sound of the bus or the subway. Here's a sample second-level response.

While Alden Nowlan's poem "A Note on the Public Transportation System" doesn't explicitly incorporate any sounds, it is all about sound. The poem refers to speech on a number of occasions even though it's in the negative; it's all about how speech doesn't work out. The speaker begins a conversation but finds out that

once you've spoken you can never
go back to being comfortable
with silence

He can't go back to silence even if he has nothing to say, even if he stops talking. The conversation that the poem is based on is actually silent. One can imagine that the sound that dominates is not conversation but rather the grinding of the bus gears or the rocking of the subway. The last stanzas seem to imply movement with their repetitive indents. It's as if the two people in the poem can sit in silence, but they're still going somewhere. They actually aren't in silence because they're still accompanied by sound—though it's not the sound of their own voices. In other words, they don't have to go back to silence.

7. From the poem, the things that you can tell for sure are the following:
- They both take public transport.
 - They both read.
 - They don't have a lot to say to each other.
 - One of them (unfortunately) smokes.
8. You may well have used some poetic techniques even without being aware of it. You likely did employ metaphors or similes to describe the stranger you spoke to. Perhaps he had an accordion wheeze or she was sharp as an icicle.

Section 2: Lesson 2

1. There are a number of ways to describe the speaker of a poem. Just be sure that when you make an assumption or a point about a speaker, you have evidence to back it up. Often, assumptions about gender are tricky. If there's no clear evidence, for the sake of convenience you can refer to the gender of the speaker as the same as that of the author.

Here are some things that you might have said about the speakers in each of the poems that you've read so far in Module 4.

- a. "Wild Geese"—The speaker seems to be another lonely soul since she mentions that she has stories of despair. At the same time, she comes across as open and reassuring, perhaps even wise. She doesn't try to make the world seem less scary, but she does insist that the person she's talking to has a place in it.

- b. “Griffin of the Night”—The speaker is definitely a parent. (It isn’t made clear if it’s a mother or a father.) He feels uncertain and scared himself as he tries to comfort his child.
 - c. “A Word on Statistics”—The speaker in this poem might be a pessimistic bureaucrat but she also seems a bit weird. Maybe she’s a bureaucrat who’s gone over the edge. She shows some warmth when she mentions that ninety-nine out of a hundred people are worthy of empathy.
 - d. “A Loaf of Poetry”—Nothing really tangible is revealed about the speaker of this poem. Nonetheless, a presence is created and that presence is sweet, instructional, and sincere.
 - e. “Canada Day Love Match”—Several things are made very clear about this speaker. She’s a young single woman whose mother is trying to fix her up. Unlike many daughters, she doesn’t seem to mind her mother’s interference.
2. The first-level response you write in response to your reading of Paula Gunn Allen’s poem will be unique. Here’s a sample.

Seems a cold and confusing poem. It’s quite sad somehow like she has saved him but she still hates him. I guess she hates him because even though she has saved him, the Europeans have continued to settle and to kill the Native people. I wonder why the writer decided to call her Pocahontas because supposedly that wasn’t even her real name. The poem seems really formal and removed and she seems really in control, as if she is really the one with the power at least until the end when the image of her putrefying bones is very hard hitting and lets everything go.

3. The speaker, as is made clear in the title, is Pocahontas. Gunn Allen makes a historical allusion to the Native woman who lived from about 1595–1617 in the area that’s now the U.S. state of Virginia. Her name is said to have been Mataoka; Pocahontas was simply a nickname.

If you weren’t familiar with any of this historical information, what would you learn about the speaker from the evidence provided by the poem? You’d probably realize that her name is Pocahontas and that she’s married to a man named John Rolfe. The mention of John Rolfe as “her English husband” might lead you to understand that Pocahontas isn’t English. The name *Pocahontas* would itself support this inference.

The poem would probably point you toward the realization that Pocahontas is a Native American. At some point, she says that her husband saw her as a “dusky daughter of heathen sires”—a description that reveals typical European prejudice of the time. Pocahontas is obviously capable and manages to save her husband on several occasions. She also seems quite bitter and angry toward him.

4. It almost seems as though Pocahontas is talking to John Rolfe after death. She mentions her own death in the last lines of the poem when she says that she protected him so much that she went “so far as to die in [his] keeping— / a wasting, putrefying death.” She also accuses him of “taking / certain life from the wasting of [her] bones.” The moment also seems to be several generations after his death because she refers to his descendants.

Paula Gunn Allen could have chosen to situate Pocahontas and her husband in many different moments. She might have imagined a scenario in which Pocahontas addressed her husband while they were both alive—for instance, when they first met, at their marriage, at the birth of their son, or while she was on her deathbed. Perhaps Paula Gunn Allen felt that these moments have already been written about so much—and usually in a highly romanticized way that has glossed over or even falsified other issues. There are many good reasons that may have led Paula Gunn Allen to situate Pocahontas “after death.” Pocahontas died very young. Adopting the voice of a 22-year-old woman might not have suited Gunn Allen’s purposes. Pocahontas might still have been in love with John Rolfe and unaware of the devastation that the centuries to follow would bring the Native people of North America. In Gunn Allen’s poem, Pocahontas seems to have this knowledge and awareness.

5. Pocahontas is speaking to her English husband John Rolfe as is made clear by the title. She seems to think him stupid and silent, unable to survive without her intervention. She describes him as “a foolish child” who “chatter[s] nonsense.” He seems to judge Pocahontas, seeing her as “a foolish wanton maid” and a “dusky daughter of heathen sires / who knew not the ways of grace.” He doesn’t listen to Pocahontas. He seems preoccupied with God, if not with actually converting Pocahontas. He seems eager to please his superiors back in England and relies on Pocahontas to help him do that with profits from planting tobacco. She describes him as self-important and cheap; she claims that he

... played with [his] gaudy dreams
and sent ponderous missives to the throne
striving thereby to curry favor
with [his] king.

6. The opening lines of the poem seem loving. Pocahontas talks about cradling Rolfe in her arms, and she refers to him as “oh beloved.” She seems to be happy to save him. The closing lines of the poem mirror the opening lines in a very twisted way. She’s still cradling him although now it’s not with her arms but with her actual bones. He is a plant or crop taking life from her bones as they rot.
7. There are many strong images in the poem. Perhaps the last images, which include the wasting bones or a putrefying death, grabbed your attention most forcefully. There are a couple of strong images in the beginning—for instance, this one:

And how many times did I pluck you
from certain death in the wilderness—
my world through which you stumbled
as though blind?

The image of Rolfe stumbling and blind is very evocative. The mention of the tobacco crops as gold is also powerful and interesting in that the tobacco probably was gold as it ripened and dried, and it brought in gold in terms of revenues.

8. Whether or not the imagination has limits is an important question, though it has no one right answer. You may feel perfectly at ease writing through the eyes of a stranger; other people might feel more comfortable writing about their own lives or at least about people like them. Some critics maintain that writers are limited and can't imagine themselves into someone else's mind—especially someone who comes from a different background, gender, culture, or race—without producing a character who's flat and stereotypical. An important question that's connected to this issue is whether or not authors have the right to tell stories about anyone they want. Indeed, in some cultures, stories cannot simply be repeated. Permission must be granted; otherwise the story has been stolen. The critic and writer Lenore Keeshig-Tobias provides another reason to consider the question of who gets to tell which stories:

... native images, stories, symbols, and history are all too often used by Canadians and Americans to sell things—cars, tobacco, movies, books.

—Lenore Keeshig-Tobias

Section 2: Lesson 3

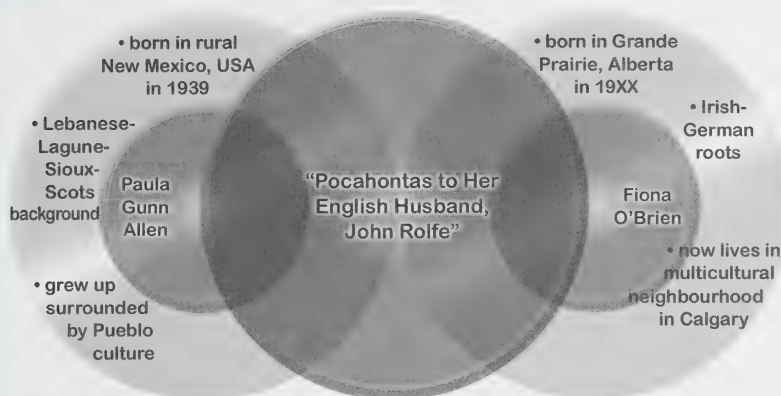
1. Your immediate answer to this question might be, “Of course. How could a poet not be able to write in his or her own voice? Don't poets write in their own voices all the time?” The truth is that poets are always constructing voices; the clearest ones, of course, are those they adopt for dramatic monologues. On the other hand, questions of public and private persona emerge.

Think about yourself for the moment. Are you the same person in private as you are in public? Do you ever feel that you need to tailor what you say to your audience? Do you feel that you're able to say what you want to whomever you want all the time? Now imagine you were facing these issues and you were publishing poems. If poets are publishing poems, they have an audience. It's important to think about how much the audience determines the voice of the poet. Is it ever possible to get to a “real” voice?

2. Social and historical context literally means where and when you live. Every place and time has its own set of “codes,” and those codes have an impact on your life. You've probably already come to realize that many factors have influenced your identity; things like gender, age, birth order, family, race, culture, geographic location, religion, and economic class all play a part in who you are and how you view the world. Some of these factors might be more important to you personally; other factors may have a larger impact in the broader society.

For instance, many women in Canada a half century ago had to quit working outside the home once they got married. Married women usually work outside of their homes today, but gender still has an impact on how men and women both live their lives. At different times, race has determined such things as whether a person lives or dies, can go to school, marry, move freely from place to place, own a business, or vote. These are the kinds of things that are determined by your social and historical context.

3. The Venn diagram that you drew will be unique. It depends not only on you but also on the poem that you chose and the poet who wrote it. You probably found that you had to do a bit of research to find out the writer's social and historical context. Here's a sample Venn diagram drawn by Fiona.



These are just the barest of bones. There are many other aspects of a person's social and historical context that you may have chosen to mention. You'd also need to assess what elements of a person's historical and social context are particularly relevant vis-à-vis the poem and poet.

4. The poem that you mention will depend entirely on you and what your experience has been. The poet Wilfred Owen, for example, was a British soldier who wrote about his experiences in the trenches in World War I. Presumably, these poems would be far outside of your experience. You may enjoy them anyway, but you may also find it hard to identify with them.
5. At first glance, you'll see that the first three poems are much shorter than the last one. The titles are all very short and direct, just one or two words. They range from the alliterative "Simply Sleeping" to the statement "That's Good," which almost seems to be a clipped part of a conversation. "Resemblance" and "Dividers" are single words that are quite open to interpretation. All of the titles, in general, are quite ambiguous, which means they have a broad number of interpretations—unlike Paula Gunn Allen's poem, which is very explicit and specific.
6. There are several very strong images contained in the poetry. The one that stood out the most will depend on your own personal tastes and experiences.
7. a. The title "Dividers" might refer to the dividers that hang between beds in a hospital room. It might refer, as well, to other kinds of dividers—the divisions between the family and the person who is ill, for instance. Many things mentioned in the poem seem to divide or separate—the window that separates the patient and the view, the doctor's eyeglasses that "fix the distance between them and pain," and the room entrances where relatives leave flowers.
- b. There are many possibilities for an alternative title. One possibility might be "Usually," which is repeated at the beginning of each stanza.

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8. a. According to the poems “That’s Good” and “Dividers,” the hospital is a place of death. The man in the next bed is carried out to the public graveyard, and relatives seek forgiveness from their “future dead.” A strong sense of destitution is present; death isn’t being treated as something noble. The hospital windows are gray, and they provide a view of the traffic of all things. The doctors seem to be slightly cruel and distant with their “sharp noses / and eyeglasses / that fix the distance between them and pain.” The relatives don’t even enter the rooms, which contributes to an atmosphere of fear and hopelessness. The hospital is a stark place with “unadorned women” who “walk the hallway tiles” and sons “who stand under light fixtures.” It’s claustrophobic, which is emphasized by the closing image of “a punctured lung / sucking away all the world’s oxygen.”
- b. There are moments when the poems give the reader glimpses outside of the hospital. For instance, in “Simply Sleeping” the view shifts from the person in the bed when he is compared to “soldiers / dozing in midnight trucks” who are presumably somewhere outside the hospital. Mention is made of the public graveyard in “That’s Good,” which is perhaps an equally destitute image. The poem “Resemblance” seems to flash back to an earlier, happier time before the father became ill. It’s still in the hospital room because the father is referred to as “this deep sleeper,” but the daughter thinks back to a moment when they’ve gone to the jeweler’s so the father can sell his ring to buy his daughter poems. “Dividers” just hints at the world outside the hospital when it mentions the windows that look out onto “the traffic below / and the weather outside.”
9. Family isn’t directly mentioned much in the four poems, aside from the fact that readers know that a daughter is speaking about her father. In one instance, there seems to be a sense of hope on the part of the daughter. In “That’s Good,” she’s relieved that “Death cannot repeat its deed / in the same room / on the same night,” so she feels her father will live at least one more night. On the other hand, in “Dividers” the picture that’s created is much more hopeless:

and sons stand under light fixtures
clutching x-ray files
affirming that cruelty can fade
if only their parents had more time.

It seems to be children who are waiting for news of a dying parent. Relatives who “leave / flowers at room entrances” are mentioned, but there also seems to be some distance or fear since they also leave “prayers seeking forgiveness / from their future dead.”

10. The speaker seems to be reflective—looking at her father now in the hospital and understanding him as a complicated person. She seems to be loving but also slightly critical. She refers to him as a “deep sleeper” but also mentions his anger “caused by reasons he cannot recall.” She indicates that she grew up wanting to be different or distant from him when she tells him that “his nose looks nothing like mine,” but the fact that she mentions his sacrifice (the ring) to buy poems for her seems to indicate that she’s appreciative. She talks about her father in the third person except in “That’s Good” when she addresses him directly. In “Dividers” she doesn’t refer to her father at all but rather talks more generally about the experience.

11. The moment when the speaker's father sells his ring in order to buy her poems seems to be one of the more joyful moments. When the man in the next bed dies, perhaps she doesn't feel a sense of joy so much as a sense of relief. As well, her description of the soldiers sleeping "letting their souls spin / until they suddenly turn into angels" is quite a powerful and beautiful image that might be described as joyful.
12. There are innumerable approaches that you could take to illustrate, film, or compose a score for these poems. A lot of visual detail is provided in each poem, so illustrating or filming is probably not that difficult to imagine. Colour doesn't seem to play a big role in the poems, so you might consider filming or photographing them in black and white. Black and white might also emphasize the stark nature of the hospital.

If you look back at the poems and search for clues regarding sound, you'll find them surprisingly silent. For instance, no mention is made of either relatives or patients moaning or crying. This lends the poems a slightly eerie quality. You might record muffled or echoing sounds—footsteps in strangely silent hallways, the opening of a window, the switching on of a light, or the shuffling of charts and X-rays. A composition or a track of background sounds to accompany "Dividers" might incorporate an underlying sound of breathing since the image of a punctured lung plays a big part in the poem.
13. This question is faced by all writers who rely on their own lives for material. Many writers of poetry and prose will admit that they've angered family or community by revealing information considered personal or private. These issues lead to larger questions about art. What is it necessary to reveal? What is it cruel to reveal? What role do ethics and morality play in this question? Every artist or writer has to face these questions and decide for himself or herself.
14. This question arises frequently for the reader. Ultimately, it's a personal preference; some readers insist on knowing something about the lives and ideas of the writers they read while others prefer not to know anything. You'll need to decide for yourself whether or not the poet's individual circumstances make a difference to your perception of the poem. For instance, do you think it's important to know if the poet wrote from prison? While in exile? On a luxury yacht? While raising four kids?
15. Whether or not any of Iman Mersal's ideas about writing poetry coincide with your own will depend on your own definition of poetry. Many people do see poetry primarily as a vehicle for emotions—a view that differs from Mersal's own. The fact that she wrote the poems for her father months after the actual events seems to correspond with William Wordsworth's vision of poetry as "emotion recollected in a state of tranquility."

Section 2: Lesson 4

1. Love has an endless number of clichés written about it. Here are a few that are in the form of aphorisms (concise statements of truth like proverbs):

- Love is blind.
- Love conquers all.
- Absence makes the heart grow fonder.
- Love hurts.
- All's fair in love and war.
- Love makes the world go round.
- Everybody loves a lover.
- Love is all you need.

Love in our society is associated with the colour red, with roses, and with the heart. Many names that people use for loved ones have become clichés—for example, *baby*, *honey*, and *darling*.

To find more clichés about love, you need only turn to pop songs or romance novels. Clichéd lovers might be a tall, mysterious man and a slender, beautiful woman. They'll likely fall in love at first sight, experience some problems, resolve them, and get married in the end. (Or perhaps they'll hate each other at first but over time come to realize how wrong they were.) They'll live happily ever after, spending long evenings by the fireplace, gazing into each other's eyes. You get the picture.

Your short poem may not be unique in terms of its language; that's the point of clichés. On the other hand, it may be unique in the way that you combined your clichés. Here's a sample poem.

When I think of you, I burst with bonbons.
The twinkle in your eye lights the fire of my soul.
Soft rose petals unfurl at the sound of your name.
We are made for each other, darling, as two halves make a whole.

2. Since it's based on cliché, the attitude toward love in the poem you wrote will probably be sincere, earnest, and hopeful. It will probably be certain as well—without doubts as to the nature of love.
3. The vision that you wrote about in the poem may have matched your own vision of love at different times in your life. Most people are probably a little more realistic or doubtful than a poem based on clichés would indicate. Some people may be downright cynical. The short poem or prose piece that you wrote for this question will reflect your attitude and experience. Here's a sample poem.

Love never came when I called it.
It just showed up one day on the front porch.
I opened the door and it snuck in with the cats.
I guess it's here till it gets tired and moves on.

4. The tone you employed for your own poem is probably quite different than the one you used for your greeting-card poem. If you compare the tones of the preceding two poems, you'll notice a big difference. One is ecstatic and exuberant, making use of hyperbole everywhere. The other seems a little puzzled, resigned, and definitely understated.

5. It's likely that the last stanza surprised you. At first, the speaker seems to talk tenderly about the rose. It isn't until the third stanza that she indicates that she'd rather have a limousine than a rose. That attitude undermines the beginning, which comes across as loving and seems to cherish the rose. It's almost like a punch line in the last stanza when the speaker says that she'd rather have a limousine. Suddenly she doesn't seem so "loving" but rather blatantly, exaggeratedly materialistic.
6. The poem is ostensibly a conventional love poem, so the speaker is probably a single woman being courted by a man. Not much information is provided about her, but it seems that she's experienced in romance. She indicates that she "knew the language of the floweret," which implies that she's had time to learn that language. She's not completely young and naïve. Apparently, she has received roses before, which the reader discovers in the last stanza when she complains "it's always just my luck to get / One perfect rose."
7. This poem should be fun to read aloud. What did your audience think of your presentation? Because there's a shift in attitude in the last stanza, there's the potential to really surprise the listener, and you can use your voice to enhance that shift. You may have chosen to read the first two stanzas very delicately and softly as though the speaker absolutely treasures the rose. This could mean emphasizing the words used to describe the rose, such as "tenderly," "deep-hearted," and "pure." The speaker seems sincerely touched to have received the rose. The last stanza reverses that trend, coming across as irritated and demanding. You might choose to speed up in order to relay the speaker's exasperation. The volume would also increase since it's important to come across as bold and brassy.
8. There are a number of adjectives that you might choose to describe the tone of this poem. *Bold* and *brassy* are two possibilities. You might also say *sarcastic*, *exasperated*, *irritated*, or *cynical*.
9. There may be some words you didn't recognize. Many of them aren't commonly used in conversation, but you may have come across them in your reading. Here are the definitions of five adjectives that may not have been familiar to you:
- snide: slightly sarcastic; sly or a bit spiteful
 - congenial: agreeable; flexible and willing to go along with other people
 - condescending: haughty or patronizing
 - didactic: instructional; teacher-like; preachy
 - diffident: shy or without self-confidence
10. a. Mother Nature has gone bankrupt, and this memo is to lay off her employees—the flora, fauna, minerals, and elements.
- b. The memo doesn't seem to be from Mother Nature herself but perhaps from an upper-level employee, maybe a Chief Administrative Officer, an accountant, or a consultant. It could even be from the bailiff!
- c. The audience, of course, is made up of the flora, fauna, elements, and minerals. The reader is in the position of eavesdropper.
- d. "Memo to the Employees of Mother Nature" has an official ring to it. A memo is an administrative tool that bosses frequently send to employees or employees send to each other. It seems kind of "dry" in the same way that Szyborska's poem "A Word on Statistics" sounds.

- e. The most notable aspect of the language of the poem is that it refers to Mother Nature in corporate terminology. She's called the "parent company," which has gone "bankrupt" because she's in "arrears." "Management" and "market share" are also mentioned.
11. a. The diction of memos is typically clear and concise. Texts of this sort are often laid out in points or steps. They're often in language that's slightly formal since they usually move between colleagues, from business to customer, or from supervisor to employee—as opposed to moving between family members or close friends.
- b. You might identify the tone as clear, formal, authoritative, dry.
12. Many kinds of writing fall into this category. They might include instruction manuals, recipes, labels on food, lists of ingredients, liner notes in CDs, book jackets, grocery lists, textbook instructions, checklists, guides, or pledges (as in 4-H Clubs).
13. Everyone's list will, of course, be different. Here are three examples of the sort of idea you may have come up with:
- memo to my grandmother on her ninetieth birthday
 - memo to the person who sat behind me on the bus and chewed gum very loudly
 - memo to the mice from the cats
14. Your response will depend on the option that you chose. Read your piece of writing aloud to someone to get some immediate feedback. Here are some sample versions for two of the options:
- Dorothy Parker's poem "One Perfect Rose" as a memo:

Memo to the Man of My Life

Please exchange any future roses for a limousine.

- Mary Oliver's poem "Wild Geese" as a how-to manual:

How to Enter into the Family of Things in Nine Easy Steps

- Step 1: Do not be good.
Step 2: Do not walk on your knees for a hundred miles through the desert.
Step 3: Do not repent.
Step 4: Let the soft animal of your body love what it loves.
Step 5: Tell me about your despair and I will tell you mine.
Step 6: Notice that the world goes on.
Step 7: Realize that the world offers itself to your imagination.
Step 8: Hear the calls of the wild geese.
Step 9: Enter into the family of things.

15. You may have identified several ways in which the format affected tone and diction. First of all, the language became much more sparse and formal so the tone seems business-like, impersonal, and authoritative. The rigid organization seems to erase any mystery. Obviously instructions and memos aren't meant to be mysterious or beautiful; they're completely functional.

If you want a further challenge, construct an ordinary memo—one that might circulate in a company or school—written in the form and tone of one of the poems that you've read. Can you imagine letting people know that office hours have changed in the tone and form of "Wild Geese"?

Section 2: Lesson 5

1. Your description of a toad will be unique. Here's one student's description.

A warty toad full of bumps and lumps was in the driveway one day. His mottled skin blended in with the gravel in both colour and texture. His eyes bulged, stubborn and furious, staring blankly at the bothersome dogs. His body was the shape of an odd fruit, making him seem clumsy and pathetic. He hopped heavily and uncertainly looking for shelter from the barking dogs who nosed him anxiously. His funny legs and webbed feet scraped against the gravel as he made his way under a board.

2. Did you manage to appeal to all of the senses? The sample given in the suggested response to the preceding question appeals to the senses of sight (*mottled, shape of an odd fruit*), hearing (*barking, scraped*), movement (*hopped heavily, nosed, scraped*), and touch (*warty, bumps, lumps, skin the texture of gravel*). There was no mention of smell or taste (fortunately perhaps!).

3. Did you find examples for each kind of imagery from the poems you've read in Module 4? Did you notice that some poems had very little imagery? You may have had trouble finding an example of gustatory imagery. Following are some possibilities for the other six.

Imagery		
Sense	Kind of Imagery	Example
sight	visual	the broken wires dangling between you —Alden Nowlan
hearing	auditory	and feel the eruption of silver sparks electrify the sky. —Sharanpal Ruprai
smell	olfactory	Deep-hearted, pure, with scented dew still wet— One perfect rose. —Dorothy Parker
taste	gustatory	

touch	tactile	his other fist clenched in my hair* —Michael Ondaatje
movement	kinesthetic	letting their souls spin until they suddenly turn into angels —Iman Mersal
temperature (hot/cold)	thermal	small me sweating after nightmares —Michael Ondaatje
other felt sensations		Balled up in pain —Wisława Szymborska

*It could be argued that this evokes a sensation of pain rather than touch. The truth is that none of the poems you've read yet provides a clearly tactile image.

- Your brainstormed list of terms will depend on how many figures of speech you remember. You should at least be able to remember the few that have been mentioned in this module. The chart in question 5 lists a few more. Note that symbolism and repetition aren't always classified as figures of speech, but if the terms are used in a broad sense to include any unusual use of language to create special effects, they can be.
- Your chart should look like this one.

Figures of Speech	
Terms	Definitions
hyperbole	exaggeration used for emphasis or effect, either serious or humorous
metaphor	a comparison that describes one thing in the terms of another
apostrophe	the addressing of a thing, place, idea, or absent person as if present and able to understand
understatement	the representation of something as less than it is, often for humorous effect
synecdoche	the use of an important part to refer to the whole
symbolism	a reference to an object, person, or event that has a meaning greater than its literal meaning
simile	a comparison in which one thing is likened to another, signalled by the use of the word <i>as</i> or <i>like</i>
repetition	the repeating of a word, phrase, or idea to create emphasis
personification	the attribution of human qualities to things that aren't human
metonymy	the assigning to an object the name of something else with which it's associated

Section 3: Lesson 1

1. Your experience reading the poem silently may have been disorienting at first because of the irregular line lengths and because the lines are centred on the page. You may have found yourself rushing or breaking off a line at inappropriate moments. You may also have found yourself catching a rhythm and pacing yourself to match it.
2. If you can easily imagine rhythm, reading out loud might not have been that big a change from reading silently. On the other hand, reading out loud may have enabled you to track the rhythm of the poem while you were reading silently. When you read Dorothy Parker's "One Perfect Rose" out loud earlier, the tone likely jumped out at you. The rhythm probably jumped out when you read Motion's poem aloud, and you may have found yourself falling comfortably into a rap/hiphop groove.
3. You'll notice that the poem contains a lot of rhyme and repetition, which help create the rhythm. It employs some colloquial language that makes it seem more "spoken" or conversational. Motion also uses a few phonetical spellings of words as they're sometimes spoken—such as *tho* and *tryna*.
4. The song you chose will determine how you filled in the chart. Hopefully, you chose a song that has a very clearly defined rhythmic structure. There are many possible options—rap, hip-hop, blues, folk, classical, rock, salsa, country, reggae, bhangra, just to name a few. The structural elements you listed would likely include details like the number of lines in each stanza, the rhyme pattern, any repetition, the use of colloquial or conversational language, or anything else that struck you about the structure of your particular song. The Themes/Issues/Topics box might include things like love, loss, loneliness, happiness, or hope.

Section 3: Lesson 2

1. You may have thought of a number of examples where sounds or syllables are important but the meaning attached to them isn't. Perhaps one of the best-known examples is jazz improvisation. Singers like Ella Fitzgerald would improvise with their voices by making up words and sounds to the music. A jazz improvisation might sound something like, "bee bee doo op she wop na na na na."

Perhaps you've read Lewis Carroll's famous poem "Jabberwocky," which is itself a made-up word. Throughout the poem, Carroll employs a "nonsense" language but places it within the framework of the English language. It's possible to go through the poem and identify nonsense nouns and verbs and replace them with words you actually know.

Of course, if you grew up with Dr. Seuss books and television shows like *Sesame Street*, you'll be very familiar with this sort of thing. And many children's songs—like "Skinnamarink," recorded by Canada's Sharon, Lois, and Bram (among others)—make use of nonsense syllables that are easy to remember and appeal to children's innate love of sound.

2. Responses will be personal. Perhaps you've never stopped to think about words this way; but other people have. Canadian recording artist Meryn Cadell maintains that she named her second album *Bombazine* because she saw the word in the dictionary and liked it. By the way, *bombazine* is a kind of fabric.

The Canadian Comedic team The Vestibules has recorded a routine called "Bulbous Bouffant" in which they play with the sounds of a variety of everyday words. You may be able to find this recording on the Internet, or you might catch The Vestibules performing it on television. If you'd like to have fun hearing some experimentation with the sounds of words, irrespective of their meanings, be sure to watch—or just listen to—this routine if you ever get the chance.

Section 3: Lesson 3

1. a. The onomatopoeic word that you came up with will depend on the sound that you chose. If, for instance, you tried to describe the sound of typing on a keyboard, you might have invented the word *driddidruddi*. If you tried to describe the sound of skates stopping on ice, you might have come up with a word like *skraark*. Whether or not you think another language would work well to describe your chosen sound will depend on your knowledge of languages. Many people often find that some languages are better for describing certain concepts or sounds than others.
- b. This longer description will again depend on the sound that you chose. As you try to describe the sound in a sentence, you might find it harder to concentrate on the sound itself. It may be impossible to avoid describing the elements around it, for instance the movement of the fingers on the keyboard. Nevertheless, here's an attempt to translate the sound of typing on a keyboard into more words.

a soft galloping murmur that doesn't click and clack loudly like an old-fashioned typewriter but burbles and whispers steadily, punctuated by the odd thump of the space bar

Did you find that you used pre-existing onomatopoeic words to describe the sound?

2. a. You may have identified the euphony in the lines from Tennyson. It's primarily created by *m*, *n*, and *l* sounds, which are soft and melodic. There are many vowels in these lines. Letters that might be seen as cacophonous are in short supply; only *b* and *d* appear.
- b. If you take alliteration to mean the repetition of letters only at the beginnings of words, then you'll see alliteration in *moan* and *murmuring* as well as *in*, *immemorial*, and *innumerable*.
- c. Several letters are repeated. As previously mentioned, *m* and *n* are repeated most. The letter *b* is repeated twice toward the end of the second line. The letter *l* is repeated three times and the letter *s* four.
- d. You might say that the lines themselves murmur. They seem to be full of busy, soft sounds. Words that you might use to describe it could be *soft*, *droning*, *drowsy*, *murmuring*, and *quiet*.

3. The lines you invented will be unique. Here’s an example of what might be called cacophonous language.

Ghastly statue with one gray toe
Big as a Frisco seal
—Sylvia Plath

Do you think Sylvia Plath succeeds in creating cacophony? How does she do it?

There are many ways to create cacophony. You might have chosen to use more “explosive” words that feature harsh or hard sounds like *g*, *k*, *t*, *p*, or *b*. Cacophony is about dissonance, so it can also be about creating contrasts with words—setting them up so they’re jarring or hard to pronounce.

If you happened to find an example of cacophonous language in the newspaper, on TV, or in a poem, can you identify why it might have been used? For instance, do you think cacophonous language makes sense as a marketing tool?

4. Euphony and cacophony tend to depend on different kinds of letters. Euphony, because it creates a kind of smoothness or richness, might be seen as more resonant. Because the ear listens for this unity and smoothness, the images and ideas may actually be more unified as well. Cacophony, because it relies on dissonance and harshness in sound, may seem to be more suitable for random, less-unified images or images that are grating or harsh. It would be interesting to try to write a cacophonous passage about an image or idea that’s pleasant and soothing or a euphonious passage about an image or idea that’s harsh and cruel. Many different effects can be produced by this kind of contrast in form and meaning.

Section 3: Lesson 4

1. a. The way in which you describe the movement or rhythm of your life will depend on your personal experience. Tyson’s description of the rhythms of his own life is as follows.

My life started off slowly and moved evenly until I was seven. Then there was a huge bump—we moved. And the next eleven years have been staccato—jumping and moving and never quite settling down. Something new is always popping up.

b. In Tyson’s description, the rhythm of his life seems to be linear. Imagine a line on a monitor in the hospital that features slow, even waves in the beginning and then the waves becomes jagged and irregular with much sharper peaks. Now, say Tyson didn’t move for the next five years, perhaps you could see his life has completed a cycle; he’s returned to the long slow rhythms of his childhood.

You could also look at it in a different way. Whatever linear rhythm has governed your life, smaller cyclical rhythms have existed also: from school year to school year, birthday to birthday, morning to noon to night to morning, season to season, month to month, weekend to weekend. There are probably many things that repeat for you each year—family occasions, cultural events, religious holidays and festivals.

- c. Depending on the rhythm that you chose to write about, your poem or paragraph will vary. To create a poem that captures the rhythm of the seasons first of all would depend on the number of seasons. Where there are four seasons that last about the same amount of time, you might create a poem with four stanzas of equal length. In a place where one season lasts longer, say winter, one of the four stanzas might be a lot longer than the other three. In a place where there are two seasons, wet and dry, there might be two long stanzas.

Imagine how a poem would look, for example, if you tried to capture the rhythm of a bus ride. How could you make the words stop and start on the page the way a bus stops and starts on the street?

2. a. Did you manage to scan your name successfully? If your name has one syllable, you're in luck because it's going to be stressed. If your name has more than one syllable, then you'll have to listen carefully. To double-check the accuracy of your work, go through the checklist of methods for identifying stressed and unstressed syllables. Here's what the students in Ms. Kim's class came up with for their own names.

/ ˘
Carmen
/ ˘
Tyson

/ ˘
Levi
˘ / ˘
Fiona

- b. Check your scanning against these responses. Were there any surprises?

˘ / ˘
fantastic

/ ˘ ˘
rectangle

/ ˘
zipper

˘ / ˘ / ˘
refrigerator

˘ /
ringette

˘ / / ˘
adult or adult

/ ˘ / ˘
superficial

/ ˘
ransack

3. The possibilities for the examples that you came up with for each type of metre are endless. Compare your ideas to the examples in the following chart.

Metre	Additional Examples
iambic	afraid, Michelle
trochaic	flower, random
anapestic	Tennessee, Mary-Lou
dactylic	pottery, fairytale
spondaic	third base, full moon

4. Your response will depend on the word that you chose earlier. Take, for example, the word *bombazine*. The scansion of the word varies depending on where you live. In England, it's dactylic, which means that it follows the same pattern as words like *pottery* and *fairytale*. In Canada and the United States, it's usually anapestic, following the pattern of *intervene* and *dispossess*. The word does have a very interesting sound; perhaps the sound is more interesting than its meaning since it refers to a type of fabric.

Bombazine has some interesting connotations deriving principally from the word *bomb* that makes up the sound of the first syllable (though in its origins the word has no connection with explosives). The syllable *-zine* brings to mind *magazine* or *e-zine*. The U.S./Canadian stress on the last syllable accentuates the similarity with the word *magazine*. The sounds are interesting given the prominence of *b* and *z*. It seems quite a strong, almost explosive, word. It's probably hard to decide whether you like a word for its rhythmic qualities. On the other hand, you may find that you like the sound of multisyllabic words rather than monosyllabic words, and this is ultimately connected to rhythm.

5. a. The writer's guide is pointing out different parts of the prison: Max Shack, Four Post, West Block, and Yard Side. If you scan these phrases, you'll see that they're all spondaic metre—or close to it—with each word accented (though others might argue that some are closer to being trochees).
- b. There are many levels at which the meaning and the rhythm seem to correspond. First, the guide could be speaking clearly and emphasizing the new names for her so she'll hear them and remember them. Second, it might be quiet within the prison as they walk down the long path, so the words seem to stand out with even greater emphasis than if they were spoken in a crowd or on a busy street. Finally, they're parts of a prison, so one can't help but think of the clanging, banging sounds of a prison, which the short, sharp words—the spondees—seem to mimic.

Spondees are used rarely in poetry; it would be hard to imagine a poem that was written entirely in spondaic metre. It would probably be like listening to someone pounding in nails. When words are placed side by side, one tends to attract more weight than the other, so you might expect a poem full of spondees to shift to iambic or trochaic feet.

6. If you successfully scanned the extract, it will look something like the following. Note that feet are separated from each other with slashes.

∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /
 To Sleep?/ Perchance/ to dream!/ aye there's/ the rub;
 ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /
 For in/ that sleep/ of death/ what dreams/ may come,
 ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /
 When we/ have shuf/fled off/ this mor/tal coil,
 ∪ / ∪ / / ∪ ∪ /
 Must give/ us pause:/ there's the/ respect
 ∪ / ∪ / ∪ / ∪ /
 That makes/ cala/mity/ of such/ long life;

You probably noticed a variation in the fourth line of the extract, which has only four feet—and one of them trochaic. Note that an actor delivering these lines would never recite them in the singsong rhythm indicated by the scansion you've done. But the iambic metre would gently give some structure and pattern to the spoken lines.

7. a. ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ /
The sum/mer thun/der, like/ a wood/en bell

Because there are five iambic feet in this line, it's iambic pentameter.

- b. ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /
And so /Tom awoke; /and we rose /in the dark
˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ /
And got /with our bags/ and our brush/es to work.

Because there are four feet in each line and most are anapestic, these lines are written in anapestic tetrameter.

- c. / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘
We were/ very/ tired/, we were/ very / merry

Because there are six trochaic feet, the line is trochaic hexameter.

- d. , / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘
Cannon to/ right of them,
/ ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘
Cannon to/ left of them,
/ ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘
Cannon in/ front of them
/ ˘ ˘ / ˘
Volleyed and/ thundered;

The metre of these lines is dactylic dimeter. Notice on the last line that the final unstressed syllable is dropped. This frequently occurs in trochaic and dactylic metre. As long as the first stressed syllable is there, another foot is counted.

- e. ˘ / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ /
Come live/ with me/ and be/ my love

There are four iambic feet, so it's iambic tetrameter.

- f. / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ /
Go and/ catch a/ falling/ star

Four trochaic feet indicate a line of trochaic tetrameter. Notice once again that the final unaccented syllable has been dropped.

- g. / / ˘ / ˘ / ˘ /
Smart lad/, to slip/ betimes/ away.

This is iambic tetrameter, but note that the first foot is spondaic.

- h. / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘ ˘ / ˘
This is the/ forest pri/meval. The/ murmuring/ pines and the/ hemlock

In this example, Longfellow primarily employs dactylic hexameter. It consists of six feet, the final one trochaic.

8. Here's how the first stanza of Dickinson's poem would be scanned:

⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /

Because/ I could/ not stop/ for Death—

⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /

He kind/ly stopped/ for me—

⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /

The car/riage held/ but just/ Ourselves—

⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /

And Im/mortal/ity.

—Emily Dickinson

As you can see, the lines of this poem alternate between iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter.

9. You may have identified a number of rhymes. Perhaps the most obvious rhyme in the whole poem is “teach it” and “reach it.” Are there other rhymes that were obvious to you?
10. The following chart gives you an idea of how the rhymes in “Rhyme on My Mind Pt. 1” might be classified. See if you identified yours in the same way. You may also have noticed alliteration, which is closely connected to rhyme. Are there any that were missed?

“Rhyme on My Mind Pt. 1”	Type of Rhyme
given/living	internal, imperfect, feminine
years/peers	internal, perfect, masculine
ash/class	internal, imperfect, masculine
teach it/reach it	end, perfect, feminine
to the side/ostracized	end, imperfect, triple
in white/insight	end, perfect, feminine
locks/blocked	internal, imperfect, masculine
repressing/lesson	end, imperfect, feminine

11. At first glance, the rhymes seem to be fairly evenly split between internal and end rhymes. Most of Motion’s rhymes are imperfect. She matches words that are similar but not identical. Can you draw any conclusions from that fact? How would the nature of the poem change if all the rhymes were perfect? There’s also a tendency toward feminine rhyme. There could be many reasons as to why she wrote this poem in this way. Perhaps she feels that imperfect and feminine rhyme creates a sense of complexity and openness. The speaker in the poem is obviously working through her life and establishing a path, and the way isn’t clear or easy. End rhyme and perfect rhyme might lend the poem too much certainty. As it stands, rhymes in the poem can’t always be predicted.

12. The examples you found probably differ from the ones that follow. Compare yours with these examples.

a. A caesura occurs in the following line of poetry, indicated by the extra spaces:

Oh beloved perfidious one,
—Paula Gunn Allen

b. Following are two examples of end-stopped lines:

- Meanwhile the world goes on.
—Mary Oliver

- Those who are just:
—Wisława Szymborska

c. Following are two examples of enjambed lines:

- You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
—Mary Oliver

- while I'm telling him
his nose looks nothing like mine.
—Iman Mersal

13. The effects of end-stopped and enjambed lines are very subtle. They don't always perform the same functions in the same way in every poem. The reasons that you identified may be different from the ones listed here.

End-stopped lines might lend themselves more easily to the rhythm that a poet is creating in the poem. They tend to “close” or “finish” a line so that the idea within it may seem more complete. End stops could also be used to add emphasis. They also may seem disruptive or heavy.

An enjambed line can be seen as more open-ended, or fluid, since the idea isn't complete and runs right into the next line. As you can imagine, this affects the pace and rhythm of the poem. Enjambment can also seem disruptive because to the eye, the line cuts off even if the idea is incomplete. Poets play with this disruption, sometimes setting up words in interesting ways that contribute to meaning. Consider, for example, the impact of the enjambment found in the last lines of Nikki Giovanni's “kidnap poem.”

yeah if i were a poet i'd kid
nap you
—Nikki Giovanni

14. a. The words *summer* and *thunder* seem to echo each other almost as an internal rhyme. The imagery itself is auditory; *thunder* and *bell* both bring sound to mind. A simile is employed to compare the thunder to a wooden bell. The image of a wooden bell might be described as an oxymoron; if it's wooden, can it actually be a bell?
- b. Blake rhymes *awoke* and *dark* in the first line. He employs imperfect end rhyme when he matches *dark* and *work*. There's some repetition of sounds with *awoke* and *work* and the alliterative *bags* and *brushes*. The word *and* is repeated at the beginning of each line as well. The imagery is primarily visual—dark—but a sense of movement is also created; they're getting up and getting to work carrying bags and brushes.
- c. Several sounds are repeated in this line, in particular the alliterative *w* and *v*. The caesura divides the two phrases, which are exactly parallel; they're identical except for the adjectives at the ends. An interesting rhyme is made with *very* and *merry*. The line also plays on the expectations of the reader; who would expect someone to say she was merry after she had just said she was tired? There's a bit of a contrast created between the two words, especially because they're located in the same position and they're the only words that change.
- d. Tennyson quite clearly relies on repetition since the first three lines are identical in structure. It serves to emphasize the threat since cannons are everywhere—cannon, cannon, cannon, right, left, in front. The visual image works together with the structure to create such an effect. The final line employs auditory and kinesthetic imagery.
- e. Christopher Marlowe's offer is quite straightforward. There's a connection between *live* and *love* and perhaps *be* and *me*. There's little concrete imagery in this example, though it's melodic nonetheless.
- f. John Donne's line provokes a very strong visual image and a magical one at that. Like Marlowe's offer, this line is obviously addressed to someone. Though the task is impossible, the speaker commands it done.
- g. The spondaic metre of the opening foot seems to emphasize the importance of the "smart lad." But this emphasis seems juxtaposed to the idea of slipping away. At one moment the "smart lad" is really and emphatically there, and the next moment he's gone. This may be supported by the fact that there seems to be a connection between the *s* and *l* of *smart lad* with the *sl* of *slip*.
- h. This fragment of Longfellow's poem is full of imagery—visual (*forest*, *pin*es and *hemlock*) and auditory (*murmuring*). The description of the forest as "primeval" and the murmuring trees create a threatening atmosphere, compounded (rightly or wrongly) by the knowledge that hemlock is poisonous! The statement that the trees murmur is personification.

15. Your freeflow first-level response to William Blake's "The Tyger" will be unique. Here's a sample from another student.

I have heard the first two lines of this poem before and when I thought that I had to read it again, I groaned because I'm not really in the mood to read poems for children. I've had enough of nursery rhymes to tell you the truth. It's a bit strange though because beyond the first two lines of the poem, I really can't see how this would be for children. It is rather scary, filled with claws and fire and hammers. In what furnace was thy brain. It seems like the guy is taking the tiger apart. I suppose that I should spell tiger with a y I am not really sure why it is spelled that way. It bugs me that he tries to rhyme eye with symmetry but then I guess that is what imperfect rhyme is for. I don't mind this poem. I would like to see Blake's paintings since I have heard about them in my art class and they sound pretty cool.

16. There is no clear identity attributed to the speaker. Obviously he or she is a person who's wondering about creation and the nature of God. The short version of the question that's asked over and over again is "Who could possibly make such a creature as the tiger?"
17. There are a number of ways that you might describe the tone of the poem. Just make sure that your assertions are based on evidence from the text. The tone might be described as *puzzled* since the speaker is having a hard time imagining what force or god could have made the tiger. *Puzzled* is perhaps too tame a word, though. The tone also seems to be one of awe. The speaker is obviously filled with wonder and admiration for the tiger. The tone might also be a little fearful—both of the tiger, which is described as having "deadly terrors"—and of the creator, who has a "dread hand" and "dread grasp."
18. The speaker directs all of the questions to the tiger.
19. The poem is rich in imagery. The images that affect you the most will depend on you.

There's a lot of imagery connected to fire; even in the first line, the tiger is described as "burning bright." Fire is mentioned on numerous occasions, and it's also connected to the process of metalwork or blacksmithing. The creator of the tiger works with hammer, chain, anvil, and furnace.

There's mention of the tiger almost piece by piece—beginning with eyes and moving on to shoulder, heart, and brain. The eye, hands, and feet of the creator are also mentioned. Both the creator and the tiger seem almost disembodied. Images of heaven are present. It's described in the beginning as "distant deeps or skies" and later when the "stars threw down their spears / And watered heaven with their tears."

Perhaps the image that seems most striking is in the second-last stanza when the lamb is mentioned. It produces a strong contrast. The speaker is trying to absorb the fact that the same creator that made the tiger may also have made the lamb. Are there other images that struck you?

20. a. The scanned poem will look like the following. The rhyme scheme has been included to the right by means of letters. The same letter indicates a rhyming line. An upper-case letter indicates the first time a specific new rhyme begins.

/ u / u / u /	
Tyger!/ Tyger!/ burning/ bright	A
/ u / u / u /	
In the/ forests/ of the/ night,	a
/ u / u / u /	
What im/mortal/ hand or/ eye	B
u / u / u / /	
Could frame/ thy fear/ful sym/metry?	b
/ u / u / u /	
In what/ distant/ deeps or/ skies	C
/ u / u / u /	
Burnt the/ fire/ of thine/ eyes?	c
/ u / u / u /	
On what/ wings dare/ he as/pire?	D
/ u / u / u /	
What the/ hand dare/ seize the/ fire?	d
/ u / u / u /	
And what/ shoulder,/ and what/ art,	E
u / u / u / u /	
Could twist/ the sin/ews of/ thy heart?	e
u / u / u / u /	
And when/ thy heart/ began/ to beat,	F
/ u / u / u /	
What dread/ hand? and/ what dread/ feet?	f
/ u / u / u /	
What the/ hammer?/ what the/ chain?	G
/ u / u / u /	
In what/ furnace/ was thy/ brain?	g
/ u / u / u /	
What the/ anvil?/ what dread/ grasp	H
/ u / u / u /	
Dare its/ deadly terrors/ clasp?	h
/ u / u / u /	
When the/ stars threw/ down their/ spears	I
u / u / u / u /	
And wa/tered heav/en with/ their tears,	i
/ u / u / u /	
Did he/ smile his/ work to/ see?	b
u / u / u / /	
Did he/ who made/ the lamb/ make thee?	b

/ u / u / u /	
Tyger!/ Tyger!/ burning/ bright.	a
/ u / u / u /	
In the/ forests/ of the/ night,	a
/ u / u / u /	
What im/mortal/ hand or/ eye	b
u / u / u / / /	
Dare frame/ thy fear/ful sym/metry?	b

- b. The base rhythm is trochaic tetrameter.
- c. On six occasions, Blake switches to iambic tetrameter. Perhaps the most important of these switches occurs in the last lines of the first and last stanzas. Blake may have changed the rhythm simply to provide variety, but he may also have used the change in rhythm to emphasize the key question.
21. The rhyme scheme has been included in the suggested response to question 21. a. It could also be written out like this: **AaBb CcDd EeFf GgHh Iibb aabb**.
- As you can see, the rhyme is very regular. The first and last stanzas are exactly the same except for one word, so the rhythm is identical.
- One point that may have given you problems is the rhyming of *eye* and the last syllable of *symmetry*. This is clearly an imperfect rhyme—though in Blake’s day (and in his part of England), the rhyme might have been perfect. A person with a Scots accent today might still consider these sounds to be a perfect rhyme.
- You might also have considered using a new letter to indicate the rhyming of *see* and *thee* in the fifth stanza; after all, this sound is so far removed in time from its first appearance in the opening stanza that the ear no longer hears it immediately as a rhyme. Still, there is a connection as Blake returns to sounds used at the opening of the poem, so the best thing to do here is to designate the sounds as rhyming.
22. It’s hard to answer this question since, unless you’ve done some reading on your own, the information that you have about Blake’s life is very limited. If you’re interested, you might seek out more information in the form of either a biography or a critical study. You may also just want to read more of his poems. You’d gain some idea of where “The Tyger” fits into his body of work. Knowing more about a writer’s social and historical context often provides valuable knowledge; you might feel that you gain a clearer understanding of his or her work.
23. a. Blake’s sense of justice isn’t revealed extensively in the poem “The Tyger.” At the same time, he asks an important question: “Did he who made the lamb make thee?” This seems to indicate a striving for a sense of fairness; the creator of fierce and cruel animals is also the creator of gentle, weak animals. (There’s likely also a religious allusion here in that for the Christian faith the lamb is a symbol of Christ and what he stands for.)

- b. Obviously, Blake's questions about a creator or a maker call God into mind. The poem does seem to explore the nature of creation.
 - c. The fact that the imagery in the poem is very vivid and strong could possibly be attributed to Blake's visions. The vision of the Creator hammering out the tyger, part by part, does seem like a dream or a hallucination.
 - d. The presence of the Industrial Revolution might be signalled by the fact that Blake turns to a heavy industrial process—metal work—to describe the creation of the tiger.
24. You probably guessed that "The Tyger" is found in the second group of poems, "Songs of Experience." While the speaker is wonderstruck and has many unanswered questions, there's very little in the poem that points toward innocence.
25. What did you come up with as an "opposite" poem for "The Tyger"? Remember that Blake was trying to show the "contraries" of the human soul. Remember, too, that Blake was steeped in Christian symbolism. The animal that he placed opposite the tiger in *Songs of Innocence*, as you may have guessed, was the lamb. As in "The Tyger," the speaker in that poem asks questions of the lamb, but he also provides answers to the questions; so it's quite different in tone. The poem "The Lamb" has a sense of certainty that's absent in "The Tyger." You can decide for yourself by reading or hearing Blake's poem "The Lamb" on various sites on the Internet or by finding a copy of it in your library.
26. Your illustration or description will depend on your interest and skill in the visual arts. There are many visual clues in the poem to work with. You might start by deciding what to feature in the illustration. Who would be present? Should the tiger be alone, or should the speaker and creator also be present? You might argue that since the answer to the paraphrased question "who dared to make you?" is never given, the tiger's creator should be absent. What kinds of colours would you use to represent the poem? With all of the images of fire and furnace, you might have chosen colours that are both dark and fiery. These are just a few of the possibilities. Whatever your choices are, be sure to trace your reasons back to the poem.

Section 3: Lesson 5

- Hopefully, you were able to think of a song or a poem that has a refrain. Many ballads have refrains that are repeated after every stanza. In music, many folk songs, children's songs, and pop songs—just to name three—have a refrain (often called a *chorus*) that's repeated after every stanza. These are the words that everyone usually knows by memory because they're repeated so often.
- You were probably able to identify the number of lines in each stanza in the chart that follows. You may have relied on your knowledge of French or of math to guide you.

Type of Stanza	Number of Lines
cinquain	five
tercet	three
sestet	six
quatrain	four
couplet	two

3. Your response will be unique. Here's an example of a short response on St. Vincent Millay's poem.

Funny poem, it seems to be not about love and about love at the same time. It seems she can't make up her mind. It's really sweet though. The images that she uses are quite strong like bush-wood smoke in autumn—smell imagery or what is it called? Olfactory imagery. And then she refers to a yellow darkness, sinister of rain. Seems a weird use of the word sinister to me but I guess that it means threatening. "Yellow darkness, threatening rain" guess the sinister sounds better. In the end she sounds certain—all the world will know but she seems to go back on herself in the last line when she says "whether or not I do." I'm thinking that this speaker is a woman though I'm not sure why.

4. There are many elements that you may have noted about the poem. First of all, its rhyme scheme is **abab cdcd efef gg**. This is the standard rhyme scheme of an English sonnet. While sonnets are often not divided into stanzas on the page, the first twelve lines are considered three quatrains and the last two comprise a rhyming couplet. Sonnets originally were written in iambic pentameter, a standard to which St. Vincent Millay adheres in this poem. And finally, if you were to use St. Vincent Millay's sonnet as the sole evidence, you'd probably argue that sonnets are about love. Conventionally, the sonnet does deal with love or a lover who has often gone away. Of course, sonnets today are being used for a much wider range of topics.
5. Your answer will depend on the poem that you chose to write about. Several of the poems are divided into stanzas—for example, Iman Mersal's "Usually." Others are in one large grouping of lines, such as Mary Oliver's "Wild Geese." The arrangement of lines does seem to have an impact on the rhythmic structure of the poem. In both of these poems, repetition also governs the poem. For instance, in Mersal's poem the word "Usually" is repeated at the beginning of each stanza, acting as a signal or an anchor.
6. When Rita Dove refers to poetic form as "a talisman against disintegration," perhaps she means the same thing that Levi meant when he said that poetry is like cooking but "if you just throw everything into a pot without any method, you'll probably end up with inedible mush." Disintegration could probably be likened to that "inedible mush."
7. There could be many reasons why contemporary poets are attracted to closed-form poetry. Whether or not you see the various closed forms as an appropriate mode of expression in the world today will depend on you. Perhaps these forms seem inappropriate because the world appears to be increasingly more fragmented and less ordered. Interestingly, that actually could be why poets are attracted to closed forms—as a means of creating rhythm or order in a confusing world. Forms function as a sort of punctuation, determining the pace and rhythm of how people read. Some poets feel that in a post-colonial world, these forms—at least those that originate in Europe—are inadequate for the expression of African or Asian experience, for example.

Section 4: Lesson 1

1. Responses will reflect personal challenges. It's important to be aware of the processes that you find relatively easy and those you find relatively difficult so that you can focus your energies on making improvements where they're most needed by monitoring and adapting the strategies you use.

2. The poems you select will be personal. You may have chosen poems from Module 4 that you really liked, or you may have included poems that you’ve read at other times in your life. A canon wouldn’t usually be as small as three poems. For instance, if you imagine the English canon of poetry, it includes hundreds, probably thousands, of poems. These are the poems considered to be classics—the ones that are taught in schools, published in books and anthologies, and given awards. They’re the poems that are generally recognized as the best or most important in the English language. It’s important to recognize that a canon has its own biases. Many poets and poems have been ignored or left out of the canon because of those biases. Many critics and writers have gone so far as to produce an “alternative canon” with the goal of bringing attention to the works of lesser-known or unfairly ignored writers.

Section 4: Lesson 2

1. Following is a checklist of poetic elements. Compare it to your own; did you think of other elements to include? You may have gone into more detail; perhaps, for instance, you listed individual figures of speech like metaphors and similes.

Be sure you understand what all the elements mean.

Checklist of Poetic Elements (What Poems Are Made Of)

• irony	• imagery	• figures of speech
• sound	• rhythm	• allusions
• denotations	• rhyme schemes	• symbols
• connotations	• repetitions	

2. You may have identified other connotations of the word *blue*. For instance, blue is the colour associated with both the sea and the sky. Blue skies have come to signify pleasant circumstances, which seems to contrast with the association that blue has with sadness.
3. *Synesthesia*, as you probably remember, refers to how one sense will be affected by another sense. When you think of the colour blue, it might bring to mind a certain kind of sound even though it’s a visual image. You might also ask yourself what kind of texture you associate with the colour blue. What kind of temperature do you associate with the colour? This is probably a very easy question to answer because in general (just check out the taps in some bathrooms), blue has come to be thought of as cold.
4. There are a number of dominant effects that you might have identified. Keep in mind that different students may identify several different effects; even if they’re contrary to each other, they’re all legitimate as long as relevant and strong reasons are provided.

Here’s one possible dominant effect: The word *blue* is inherently a paradox because it’s associated with sadness, but it has an amusing, almost silly, sound (think “bloo!”).

Do you agree with this statement? Does it correspond or contrast with your own?

5. Here's a possible series of steps that you can take as you prepare a close reading of a poem:
- Take a look at the title and note your impression of it.
 - Read through the poem once silently.
 - Read it aloud so you can note patterns, changes, and tone.
 - Read it again silently so you can adjust your impression of it.
 - Do some freewriting on your single most dominant impression of the poem.
 - Ask yourself these questions:
 - What is the situation?
 - Who is speaking?
 - How would you characterize his or her voice?
 - What is the tone? What is the speaker's attitude toward the reader?
 - Is the speaker reliable? Is the speaker ironic?
 - How does the poem achieve its effect?
 - Look at structure: shape, stanzas, lines, repetition, rhythm, metre, rhyme.
 - What are the images? Which are literal? Which are figurative? Which senses do they appeal to?
 - What do you notice about the words? How are they positioned? What do they imply or connote? Are there any allusions?
 - So what? How do these contribute to what the poem is doing?
6. How you map out and mark up the poem is up to you. Remember, unless you're using a copy of a text that can't be marked up, don't hesitate to make notes as they occur to you. Use a photocopy, a scanned copy, or a rewritten copy if necessary.
7. The situation is a bit ambiguous. No people are actually identified. Nor is any particular place. However, the title provides a clue because it mentions Harlem, a primarily African-American community in New York City. One has the sense that dreams aren't allowed to happen there—that people keep waiting for a dream to come true and perhaps they've been waiting too long.
8. There's no clear evidence as to who the speaker is. You may have had the sense that the speaker is an insider, that is, someone who's from Harlem and part of this phenomenon—the deferral of dreams.
9. There are many ways in which you may have chosen to describe the tone of the poem. It seems almost tired, fed up, yet not weak or destroyed. The repeated questions convey a sense of frustration. It might also be described as threatening or ominous given the last line of the poem.

Section 4: Lesson 3

1. a. This is a “flat-out” observation. To become a proper thesis statement, it needs to go one step further and identify an effect or draw a conclusion about the use of rhyme in the poem. Then it can be argued.

- b. This statement moves toward being arguable. A mere observation might read “Mary Oliver employs the image of geese in her poem.” In this case, there’s no conclusion drawn about the use of the image. No attempt is made to identify its role or its effect. In the statement provided in the question, an effect—or role—is identified; the poem is organized around the image.
- c. This statement is an observation, but it leans toward being arguable by the simple fact that it describes the voice as “deceptively” cold and clinical. There’s a potential argument here: Is the voice sincerely clinical? Is the voice tongue-in-cheek? Another direction that it could move in would be toward identifying the effect that the “deceptively cold and clinical” voice has. What do you think is being achieved in the poem by using it?
2. a. Observing that Motion and William Blake both use rhyme isn’t really an adequate observation on which to base an argument. Many, many poets use rhyme, so what would justify using these two? Do they deal with similar subject matter? Do they use rhyme in a similar way? Is there something about their social and historical contexts that makes it worthwhile comparing them?
- b. The connection made between Iman Mersal’s two poems is sound for two reasons. First, the poems are written by the same author; second, they both incorporate a similar image. You could base an argument on this observation.
- c. This comparison could be productive in terms of developing an argument. Mersal and Dumont are both poets connected to Alberta. They’re both writing about parents in these particular poems. And as women from visible minority groups, they may also have shared some experiences.
3. Your brainstorming process will be individual. Often if you brainstorm or freewrite extensively, you can go back and observe what issues or images keep coming up. This might suggest a possible topic. You can also brainstorm in layers; for example, you could pick one interesting aspect and brainstorm it. Then go back to that brainstorm and pick out the most intriguing word or element that came up and brainstorm it, in turn.
4. Your specific observation will take the form of a “flat-out” statement. Here are some examples:
- Motion relies heavily on internal, imperfect, feminine rhyme in her poem “Rhyme on My Mind Pt. 1.”
 - Blake introduces iambic metre at specific moments in his poem “The Tyger.”
5. Your thesis statement will depend on the observation you made in the previous statement. Now you’re trying to determine an effect or a reason for the observation that you made. Using the statements provided in the previous question, here are two examples:
- Motion uses imperfect, internal rhyme as a way of disrupting the conformity that perfect, masculine, end rhyme would establish.
 - Blake uses iambic tetrameter to emphasize the questions that he’s asking of the tiger.

6. There are many elements that go toward making a strong introduction. Your introduction should contain your thesis statement as well as the names of the poem(s) and writer(s) that you'll be discussing. It shouldn't be too long, nor should it be too general and vague. In past modules, you've thought about strategies that you can use for writing your introduction. For example, you might include
- an interesting and appropriate quotation from a critic or another poet
 - an allusion to another writer or piece of literature
 - a question to open up the discussion
 - some literary or historical background to the poem or the writer or the technique
 - a definition of an important term
7. The body of the essay will consist of a number of paragraphs that each outlines an important point that supports your thesis. Each paragraph should make a point in a topic sentence and also include evidence from the poems in the form of quotations or paraphrased details. The important thing is to strike a balance in each of your paragraphs between analysis (your points) and evidence (the detail you provide from the poems). Analysis without evidence will mean that your generalizations are unsubstantiated. Too much evidence without analysis means that you're merely retelling the poems.
8. Conclusions can be tricky. Some writers leave them till the last minute, just sticking them on at the end. For many students, conclusions feel unnecessarily repetitive. Nonetheless, they're necessary so as not to leave your reader hanging. A conclusion should close succinctly and elegantly. You might include one or more of the following in your conclusion:
- a clear restatement of the thesis
 - a clear restatement of the main points
 - a reference to the quotation, allusion, definition, or question with which you opened the paper
 - another definition, quotation, or allusion
 - a new question
 - an answer to the question that you may have raised in the introduction
9. Many useful organizational approaches can be used when writing an essay that discusses two poems. There are two broad approaches possible. First of all, you might organize paragraphs point by point or technique by technique and in each paragraph provide evidence from both poems. You could vary this approach by moving back and forth between the two works, devoting a paragraph to one and then the other until all your points are made. This is probably the most integrated approach.

With the second broad approach, you could spend the first part of the body dealing with one complete poem and then, in the second half, deal entirely with the second poem. But if you choose this approach, it's important to knit these two parts together as carefully as possible; otherwise, the essay could begin to resemble two separate, very loosely connected essays.

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